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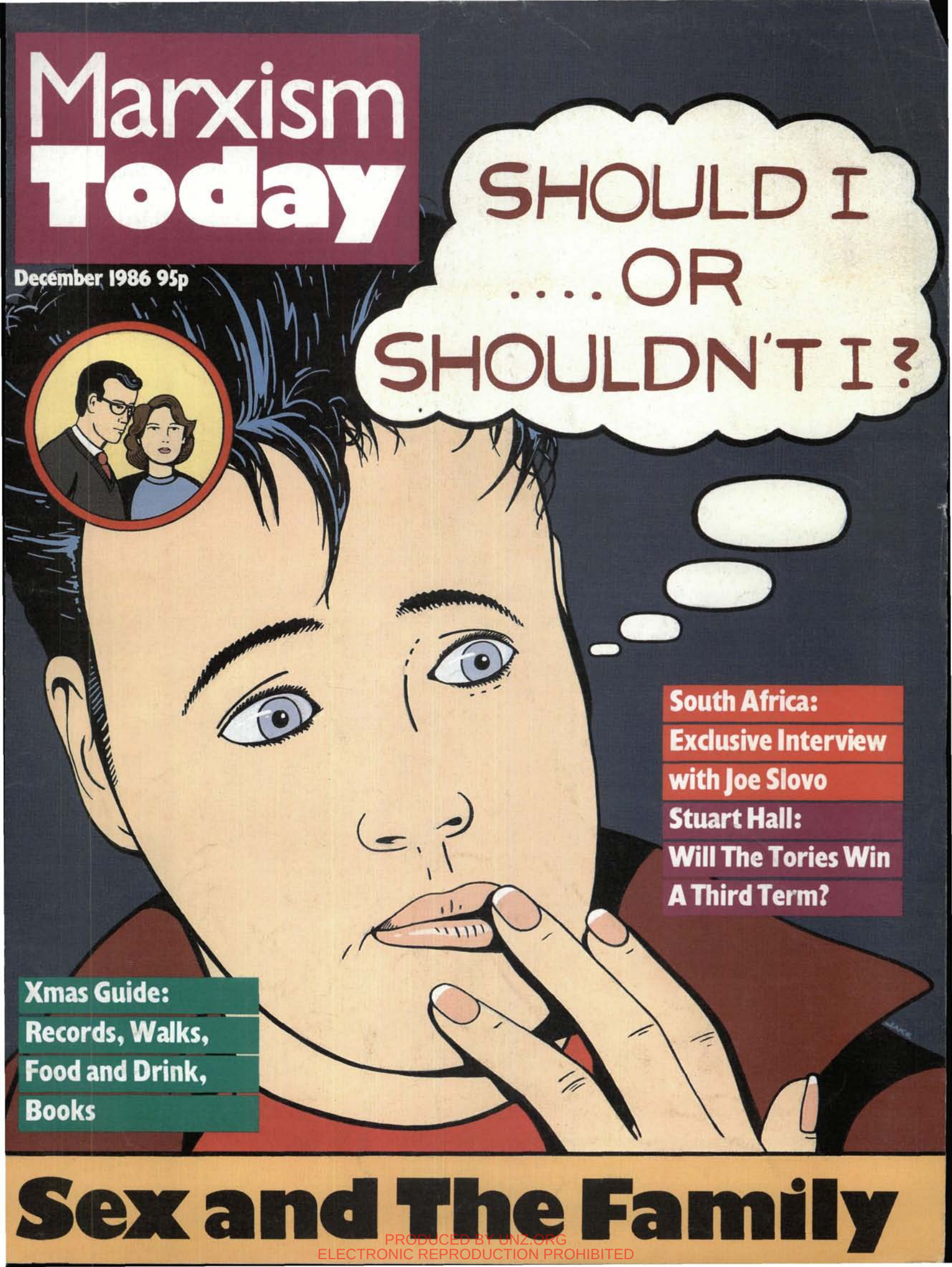

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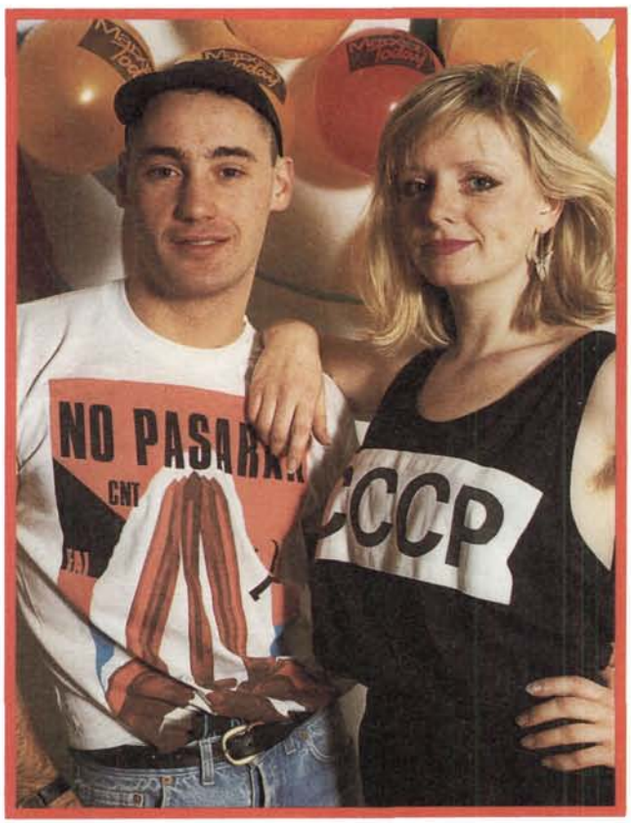

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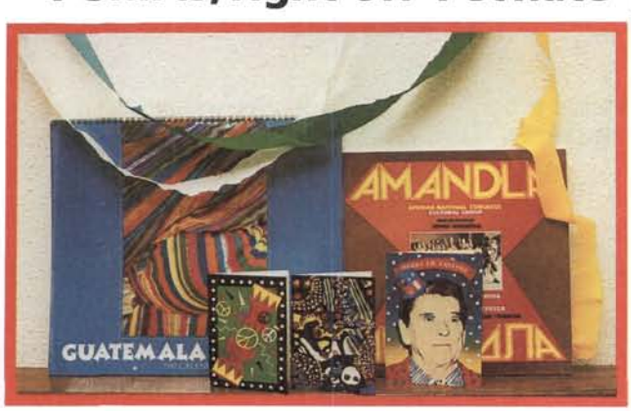

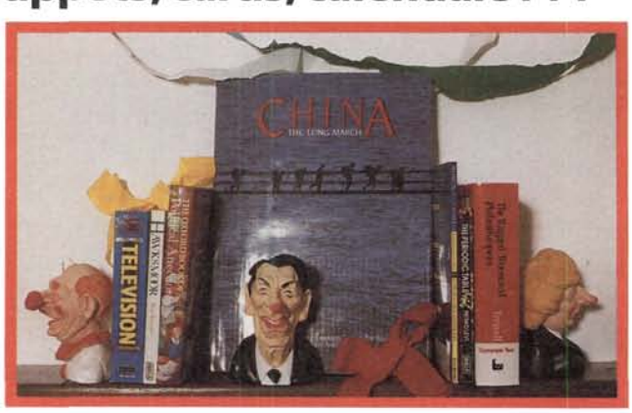

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The BBC: how independent is the newsroom's future?

Beeb On Trial

The conventional view is that Tebbit has overdone it. In the general hounding of the BBC by this government he broke the rules. He wanted to shoot the fox, but has missed and hit the pack. One of them, Sir William Rees-Mogg, has been heard to utter a few yelps of protest. This is the same Sir William who was making it clear, a few weeks before, that the appointment of his old *Times* crony Marmaduke Hussey on a free transfer from the Murdoch team was the last chance to make the BBC run properly. Now Mr Hussey has had to show that he stands with the BBC in its rebuttal.

It is true that Tebbit went too far. He attacked a particular news report, though he dared not name Kate Adie, who has a special reputation as a tough and dispassionate reporter. The grotesque suggestion that a reporter who happens to be on the spot when a hospital is bombed and children maimed and killed should report this positively has been rightly ridiculed. How positively? A Betjemanesque tone: come friendly bombs and fall on Tripoli? Or the insinuation that these small cadavers are really an elite unit of midget terrorists, neatly zapped by the F1-11s?

The government has had to edge away from Tebbit. It was only the party chairman, they say. Yet lining up behind him to fire the next shot are the second rank of rabid BBC-baiters and publicity junkies in the government. Edwina Currie clutches a dossier on *Casualty*, because it shows the NHS stretched to breaking point by overwork and damaged morale. *Woman's Hour* is said to be next.

One response to all this would be to rest the case on the good sense of public opinion. When asked to add up the Tebbits and credits of BBC coverage only 10% of it sides with the chairman, and the portrayal of the Tories as manipulators of the news becomes more sharply etched with each *Spitting Image*. But that is too complacent by half. What we are seeing now is the attempt to soften up the BBC, as the principal medium of communication not in Tory hands, before an election. If you threaten to shoot the messenger they may be persuaded to alter the news. But let us suppose that the Tories actually win the next election, alone or in coalition with the SDP. How far could they alter the character of the BBC for good?

The answer is that they could. Indeed they already have. The relationship between the Board of Governors and the management has changed; is changing still. Sustained attack wears an institution down. McCarthyism, after all, was dismissed with contempt when it first appeared, yet altered the climate of the times long after the disgrace of the Wisconsin demagogue himself. Pressure and insinuation took their toll. Executives grew weary of defending the controversial. The day came when Ed Murrow himself, who had gone out after McCarthy, was told by his chairman: 'I don't want this constant stomach-ache every time you do a controversial programme'. Murrow replied: 'I'm afraid that's a price you have to be willing to pay. It goes with the job.' The price was too high for Chairman Paley.

What price will be too high for Chairman Hussey? Because of the concentration of editorial responsibility in the BBC the strain at the top is intense. Our best television dramatist is under fire for *The Monocled Mutineer*. *Rough Justice* has been overhauled and humiliated. A *Brass Tacks* on buddy relationships between top Scotland Yard men and criminals is dropped, and reappears on ITV's *World in Action*. The BBC abandons its case which it originally regarded as 'rock-solid' on ultra-rightists in the Tory Party, with the further embarrassment that the ex-chairman of the Young Conservatives bravely continues with his own defence, even when the plaintiffs try to drop their action against him. Behind it all there is the delayed response to the Peacock Report; the sense that the Corporation is still on the Thatcher hit-list. Therefore it had better behave.

A caponised BBC diminishes British journalism. If the present pressures succeed, internal self-censorship will continue what external McCarthyism has begun. Tebbit has distracted attention from the *Panorama* libel case. But there the BBC comprehensively abandoned its journalists under fire. The Board chose the worst moment to do so. No senior executive resigned in protest, nor said publicly what all said privately. It has been left to the ingenuity of maverick MPs to keep the case under review. Too great a sensitivity to the government of the day, because it can always alter the rules of the game and the money available, makes top executives cautious.

What is needed is a dispensation which saves the best of public service broadcasting from the depredations of this government and any thin-skinned successor. That means devolving editorial control within a pluralised system, and merging the Board and the senior management.

And since broadcasters do make mistakes, and can be arrogant or unmindful of opinions they do not share, there has to be a right of reply mechanism infinitely better than the BBC's current feeble efforts in this sphere.

Unless BBC management tackles these problems it will never address the question of its own long-term survival in a cold political climate. It can only do that by candour and courage. They have to go with the job. ●

Phillip Whitehead

National Opinion Poll

Do you think the Conservative Party is right to try and influence the way the BBC covers news items or should it leave such matters to the BBC governors and managers?
Right *6%*
Leave it to governors *88%*
Don't know *6%*

What do you personally think was Mr Tebbit's main reason for producing the report of BBC bias?
For party political reasons to help the Conservative Party *43%*
A real concern for the BBC to be fair and unbiased *17%*
A general dislike of the BBC because it is paid from public money *19%*
Other answers *2%*
Don't know *19%*

Questions devised with the Independent Broadcasting Research Unit

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Photo: Associated Press

Glittering prize for Rita Levi

The Nerve Factor

Somewhere in scientific discovery lurks an incredible vitality more usually found in sport, politics and rock music. Rita Levi Montalcini, joint winner of the 1986 Nobel prize for medicine, and only the fourth woman ever, clearly has this. Her discovery of Nerve Growth Factor (NGF), a protein which stimulates neural growth, is crucial to our understanding both of how the embryonic nervous system develops.

Yet her original experiments were done under terrible conditions of persecution. Overcoming lengthy paternal opposition, she gained her medical degree in 1936 only to confront the impossibility of Jews holding office in fascist Italy. So she set up a makeshift laboratory in her bedroom, until finally driven underground.

After the war, in America, she and her joint prizewinner, Stanley Cohen, succeeded in identifying NGF as a protein in the late 50s.

It has taken 30 years for this work to be recognised. Why? Did it simply not fit in with prevailing ideas? Was it because she is a woman? Was it because she was 'foreign'? That seems ridiculous.

Rita Levi Montalcini herself generously attributes this belated interest to recent research suggesting that NGF has clinical uses, particularly in treating degenerative disorders. Still, 30 years is a long time to wait. ●

Deborah Hodgkin

Brothers At Arms

When leaders of Britain's biggest union, the Transport and General Workers', gather at the start of December for the three-monthly meeting of the union's general executive council, they will all be acutely aware of one pressing point: the long, dark night of the union is not only not over, it's back – with a vengeance.

After some 18 months of blood-letting – internal, but brutally public at the same time – the union looked as though it was regaining some stability when Ron Todd was elected general secretary for the second time, when it about-faced on the government's trade union laws on excecutive elections, and when the hard-left Walter Greendale was ousted from the presidency.

But the nightmare of those cumulative crises which rent the union at leadership level almost asunder is once again threatening its internal fabric, and its external force. This time, the immediate point at issue looks less weighty – a difference over the replacement for a retiring regional secretary in the union's south-west area. But behind this seemingly innocuous appointment lurks a larger and murkier struggle – one which carries considerable significance for both the TUC and the Labour Party.

Outside the immediate circle of the TGWU leadership, Todd has grown in stature since, and partly because of, his controversial election: within the TUC and the Labour Party, he is now a keynote figure on the Left. Inside the TGWU, things are different. Greendale's replacement as president was Brian Nicholson, a tough London docker. Widely seen as a Todd supporter when he took the top lay job, it has been an open secret in the union for months that he and Todd see eye to eye on very little: indeed, it's said in the union – though publicly denied by both – that now they barely speak to each other.

Todd and his supporters have tried to weld a new consensus, attempting to draw together the disparate factions which the bitter divisions of the two general secretaryship elections created. Some of Nicholson's supporters – who command a majority on the executive – see this as weak-kneed appeasement. They wanted out those who had clustered around Greendale, as well as the man himself: those opposed to them see their tactics now as ruthless, arrogant, trying constantly to

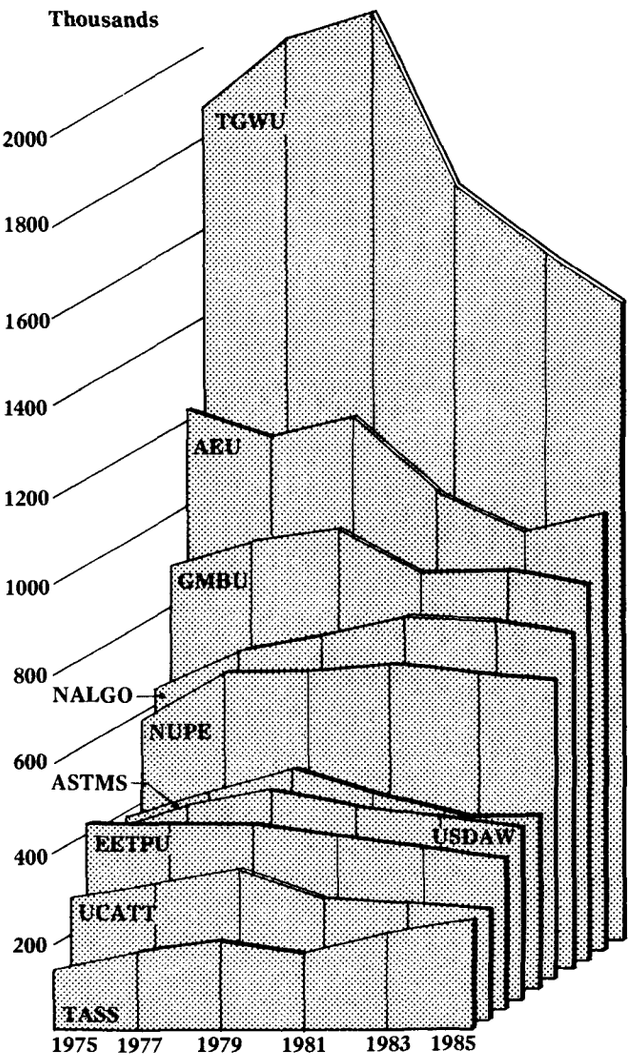

Diagram: Tony Garrett

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place their own men in key posts; Nicholson's supporters see it as trying to cleanse the Augean stables of the people they saw as having brought the union to the brink of disaster.

Left- and right-wing labels are confused in all this: Nicholson has little time for Greendale's absolutism, but is no-one's idea of a right-winger either; Todd wants nothing of the blinkered sectionalism of the Left, but equally doesn't want to see scalps being hunted.

Todd is now laying his authority on the line. The right-dominated finance and general purposes committee of the union has twice now voted not to appoint any of the available candidates to the south-west regional job; Todd has taken the initiative of pulling the appointment away from the committee and putting the issue to the December executive.

It's a high risk strategy. On current voting patterns, Todd looks set to be overturned, which would both further weaken his position internally and exacerbate divisions. At a time when some in the TGWU – principally Bill Morris, Todd's deputy, who the Nicholson camp rate not at all – are trying to take the union, at least attitudinally, into new areas such as dealing with a fragmented labour market, further leadership divisions can hardly be helpful to the TGWU's still-dwindling membership.

With the TUC committed to delivering to Labour crucial policies on the economy, and employment law, and Labour in turn committed to delivering them to the electorate, the spectacle of a riven TGWU, the largest affiliate to both bodies, is one to chill the heart of Neil Kinnock, the Labour leader and a TGWU man himself, as the time approaches for the electoral seconds-out call to decide the future of both Labour and the unions. Labour and TUC leaders will be hoping that this time, the TGWU marches properly and in unison towards its long-promised, but still far from achieved new dawn. ●

Philip Bassett

Alien Cash

Five hundred British scientists, including three Nobel laureates and 22 fellows of the Royal Society, have signed a pledge refusing to accept funding from the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI).

The pledge's organisers argue that Star Wars technology is an obstacle to future disarmament and a threat to existing treaties – including the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty, the 1967 agreement on the militarisation of outer space and the 1962 partial test ban treaty.

They also stress the potentially damaging consequences for British science of participation in SDI research. The terms of the 'Memorandum of Understanding' on Star Wars signed last November by Michael Heseltine are 'secret in perpetuity'; but parts of the memorandum published in the US magazine *Aviation Week and Space Technology* suggest that they include provisions to extend US control over vast swathes of the British information technology industry.

To restrict the transfer of technology – for the US has no intention of allowing the Soviets any access to Star Wars research – British research work would be subject to the extra-territorial application of US laws. For example, the Pentagon would be given the power to decide which British research work should be subject to US security classification.

The boycott campaigners' success will be a further blow to government hopes that British scientists would find a major role in SDI research. Of the $1.5 billion worth of orders which Heseltine expected would come to Britain only some $36m has materialised – of which around a third is earmarked for government defence laboratories. Thus far only one university team – at Heriot-Watt University – is acknowledged to be receiving Star Wars funding, for work on optical computers. ●

Jeremy Green

Machel's Legacy

The death of President Samora Machel was a watershed in the Southern African regional war – the horribly logical sequel to the 1984 Nkomati 'peace pact'. South Africa's disinformation machine has predictably been working overtime to blame the crash on external factors which did not exist, such as bad weather, pilot error, crew drunkenness, the Tupolov having outdated equipment etc.

But the authorities' combing of the wreckage for eight hours before informing Maputo about the disaster or aiding the wounded, like their refusal to obey normal international rules and release the black box to the Mozambicans, set the real background for the death of President Samora.

Whatever emerges from the international enquiry, this death symbolises the ruthless determination of South Africa to win its regional war whatever the cost in human, diplomatic or economic terms.

Even before the death of President Samora the last quarter of 1986 saw Mozambique's military and social crisis intensify to the point where the very survival of the Frelimo government was threatened. South Africa, previously content to keep Frelimo in a state of virtual impotence by its economic and military destabilisation, appeared to change tack and to be envisaging an attack on the Mozambican capital Maputo itself, just as the Mozambicans believed it was on the eve of Nkomati.

By mid-October South African commandos had already been infiltrated into the capital, the South African army was in force on the Mozambique border, from Malawi waves of heavily armed Renamo forces were unleashed across the border and took five towns in northern Mozambique.

It was the first time they had made any such attempt to hold population centres. At a summit in Maputo the front line states presidents forecast imminent open war in the region with Frelimo as the first target. South Africa then openly threatened Mozambique using the excuse of supposed African National Congress guerrillas crossing the border to lay mines.

Photo: Frank Spooner Pictures

Machel: Watershed death

That the killer bands of Renamo, created by the Rhodesian Special Branch, taken over by South Africa after Zimbabwean independence and still with no political programme and almost no identifiable non-Portuguese leadership, can be promoted to the status of a potential government by a Washington-based lobbying organisation linked to the US administration shows the Reaganite 'low intensity conflict' strategy for the ruthless and cynical genocide which it is – from Nicaragua to Afghanistan.

South Africa has always hit out at its weakest neighbours in its own moments of greatest stress. The threat of international economic sanctions was one key to the timing of the apparent decision to move decisively against Frelimo. In addition, the Zim-

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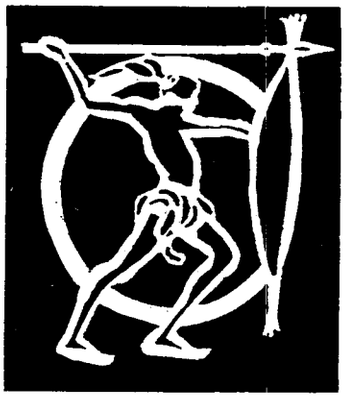

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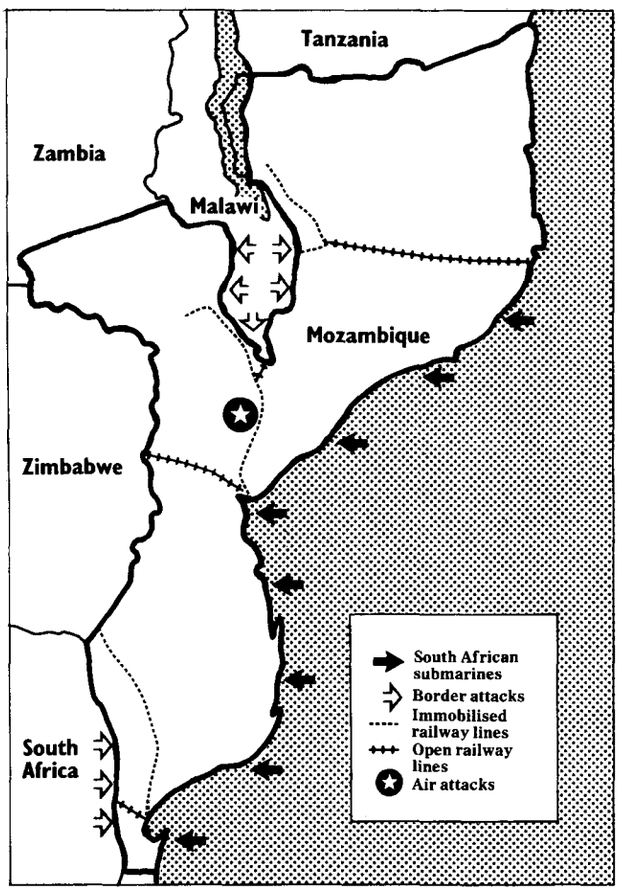

Mozambique: weakened by war and communications breakdown

babwean troops guarding the Beira road and rail corridor between Zimbabwe and the Indian Ocean port have been successful in demonstrating the South Africa's economic muscle to control all regional transport routes is not assured.

Then the squeezing of Lesotho to change its government by a coup last January proved to South Africa that this kind of virtual bantustan disguised as an independent state can be a way round Western investment bans inside South Africa itself. (Lesotho's Highland Water Scheme to be financed by the EEC and other major donors will mainly benefit the industry of South Africa's Vaal triangle.)

If Frelimo could be crushed and a client of Pretoria's installed, Mozambique would be even more useful in sanctions busting. For instance its ports could export South African coal under its own label and even South African steel disguised as having come down the Beira corridor from Zimbabwe, Namibia, Swaziland, Mauritius, Malawi and The Comoros are already far advanced in the South African sanctions busting plans.

This short-term need of Pretoria's is part of the double perspective in the 'low intensity conflict' strategy against Mozambique. For Pretoria's Western allies there is a longer-term calculation of the role of pliable neighbour states in exerting maximum leverage on a future South African regime. The US, Britain and Israel currently make enormous covert use of Malawi and Zaire against, respectively, Mozambique and Angola. This is the pattern for the future use of the states bordering South Africa – from Namibia to Mozambique – against a future nationalist government in Pretoria. ●

Victoria Brittain

Biting the Vote

With its decision to abandon abstentionism in the Irish parliament, the Dail, Sinn Fein last month laid the foundations for a long-term political campaign with implications far beyond the IRA's present military objectives.

The prelude to the decision was a long-running, often bitter dispute between the pro and anti-abstentionist tendencies in Sinn Fein. The decision was almost made at last year's conference, but the move failed to achieve the necessary two-thirds majority to overturn what was to many Republicans a central part of their creed.

In effect the change means the party has removed a major obstacle to winning mass support in the South. Who backed the change and why tells us a great deal about it. Moves to drop abstentionism were led by the younger Northern leadership, former Long Kesh prisoners Gerry Adams, Danny Morrison and Martin McGuiness. It is a curious paradox that those most vociferously in favour of more political activity are Republicans at the centre of the Northern military battleground.

They believe that to seriously advance their campaign in the North the party must overcome its credibility gap of being, in electoral terms, an exclusively Northern entity. It commands the support of some 40% of the Northern Catholic population, yet – according to opinion polls – only 2-3% of voters in the Republic. A party that seeks to unite the country under a Republican socialist flag is not going to get far, they argue, while representing just one corner of it.

Opposition to the change came mainly from older members more strongly wedded to the party's history of not taking part in 'partitionist' assemblies. Since they walked out of the conference hall last month their support seems to have followed a similar pattern.

The branches claiming to support the new small splinter group, Republican Sinn Fein, are few and mainly in the west of Ireland. The vast bulk of the Sinn Fein following seems to have stayed put. US support from Noraid – always a more conservative tribe – has been put under pressure, but will probably be won back.

The decision to go into the Dail if elected does not mean that the party will immediately have any great presence there. Partly as a move to heal the wounds of the split, Sinn Fein leaders have been stressing that they may not win any. This clever line of argument has been heard in the North since 1983, where it helped elicit helpful gasps of surprise from the media when the party exceeded their moderate stated electoral targets.

Going into the Dail will allow the party to plant its Northern seed in new ground. The key to its success since the electoral plan began with the 1981 hunger strikes and the election of Bobby Sands has been to organise and recruit among the vast reservoir of young unemployed, most of whom had not bothered to vote at all.

Photo: Derek Speirs/Report

Sinn Fein walkout

There is no shortage of such constituents in the South. With 18% unemployment there, it is on a par with the highest in the EEC. In some areas it's over 30%. In this light the 2% opinion poll support is deceptive – Sinn Fein has barely begun to work on its most fertile pastures in the Republic. ●

Alan Murdoch

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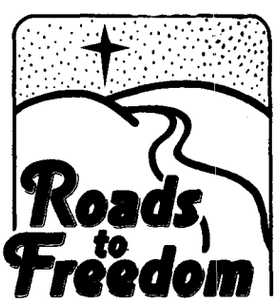

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Another Sad Story

Now the Jarrow Crusaders are back home on Tyneside and thus ends another sad episode in the politics of the 1980s. They were decent folk who deserved better. One of the most generously publicised public demonstrations against unemployment attracted about 1000 people in Trafalgar Square. Why was it one of the smallest demonstrations to enjoy one of the biggest galleries of labour movement stars? Rarely can such a well-endowed effort have been so irrelevant.

Without detracting from the sheer energy of the marchers it has to be said that the 1986 Jarrow Crusade wasn't a crusade. It was an event, in the absence of a crusade.

Unemployment has beggared the imagination of most of the labour movement, left it with no strategy, ideas, energy, no commitment to a *crusade* on either the future of work or the fate of the wageless.

We saw people from Jarrow with the imprimateur of the General Municipal and Boilermakers on their anoraks (as if they were footballers) so we could all see that the GMB was doing something about it. The labour movement, or rather bits of it, threw some money at the march, but the labour movement, including the GMB, haven't thrown their hearts or their minds at unemployment or the unemployed.

I can hear protests already, 'hang on we've done this and that . . .' Well that's true, but it is only a bit of this and that, and the trouble is that when it comes to work that's the territory of the trade union movement, and if it doesn't do anything then its weight and power gets in the way.

The first Jarrow Crusade in 1936 was, of course, one of many. And it is salutory to reflect on why it is Jarrow we remember above all.

No doubt one of the major reasons was that it was a Labour march (although it was shunned by the Labour Party and TUC leaders). Elderly people in Jarrow recall the Labour Party taking political power in the town almost like some people remember their wedding day, it was *their* own party.

The National Unemployed Workers Movement had already been organising Hunger Marches from the distressed areas with an insurgent spirit never expressed on the Jarrow Crusade, and with demands which were political where Jarrow's were parochial – though in terms of Jarrow's history, such an initiative was innovative and arresting.

Jarrow Crusade's spirit was resolute but respectable, it gathered an extraordinary community coalition which included Tories and clerics, and as Jarrow historian Frank Ennis has shown its tone was determined by its sponsorship by the local Labour council. That made it an apolitical, civic rather than a class march.

Ironic, says Ennis, that the march should have been a town event when women, who constituted a majority of the Jarrow population, were excluded from it. During the summer planning stage, three women councillors argued that women should be allowed to go. 'It's women who have had to bear the brunt,' said Councillor Mrs Robinson. But they were defeated. 'We do not want women in this. It is the job for the man', said one of the principal organisers Councillor Riley. And so women were banned.

The Jarrow experience is important not only because it reveals the depths of women's subordination within the labour movement, but because it reveals much about the meaning of unemployment we have inherited from the 1930s; the image of men hanging around the streets derives from the sexual division of labour within the home. Ennis's work provides an important corrective to that gendered image. Unemployed men left their homes as if they were employed, which reinforced women's confinement to work within the home.

Unemployment involved no redistribution of unpaid domestic work between men and women, Jarrow had never offered large-scale industrial work to women. But 'women always had to work, outside the home as well as in it. It didn't work the other way round,' says Ennis. Politics became part of the 'work' of the unemployed men and the Labour Party, too, was their work, and according to Ennis it thus became a 'mass men's Labour Party.' The campaign was by men, the object was work for men.

A strategy for political action around unemployment which is based on a nostalgic celebration of the Jarrow Crusade inevitably carries, albeit unconsciously, the mark of gender. It calls up the crisis of *men's unemployment*, a crisis which was not only a function of wagelessness but of patriarchy, of the impossibility of men either sharing their own waged work with women before the crisis, or themselves sharing the unpaid work of women in the home during it.

Yet redistribution of unpaid work and the reform of men is *still* not on the labour movement's agenda. The movement has neither intervened against the tradition of the family wage, which assumed male breadwinners and female housdewives, nor has it helped to generate a culture in which men might share responsibility for housework, for children, in other words for life beyond the wage packet.

Meanwhile the trade unions in the rest of Europe are deep into strategic contemplation of a reduction of working time, and as well as thinking about what future work will look like, they're thinking about what future working time might look like too. Are we, meanwhile, to remain stuck in the old distinction between full-time (male) and part-time (female)?

Nostalgic gestures like the Crusade and the People's March for Jobs also repeat archaic forms of political action that exclude most women, and certainly most mothers. They're still men's marches really, and so they can't help reveal the crisis of wagelessness among women and children. And when participation in politics needs to be maximised, they are sure to minimise it.

The romance of the Jarrow nostalgia also encourages doomed fantasies about what a 'productive' Britain would look like. I was talking to my brother about this late one night in one of our meaning-of-life conversations. What could be done, I asked him. He used to be a fitter. He looked at his hands, 'they're an answer. I made locomotives and cranes, and people like me used to build ships and tractors, what you're looking at feeds people, mends bicycles, makes books; delouses people . . .'

We both wept, of course, because we knew it wasn't the answer. But he was right when he said: 'Those marchers came from Jarrow and everybody says isn't the world awful and aren't these people wonderful, which they are, but it's all an excuse for doing nothing. Nothing is nudging its nose into that area of politics other than trade union barons shipping a bit of money into the Jarrow Crusade.'

This reveals a stillness where there ought to be a busy civil society. Millions of people were moved to support Live Aid and Sport Aid, millions probably *did* something to support the coal communities, it wasn't the state, or the government or even the Labour Party (which may be able to govern but isn't capable of organising a decent demo). Civil society is a shadowy space, but it's where we all live. It was within civil society that those millions were moved to act for and with people who needed them, whether in Ethiopia or Easington. But the unemployed?

I don't know what the answer is and I don't know anyone who does, and perhaps if nothing else the Jarrow Crusade is a reminder that it's time we did. ●

Beatrix Campbell

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LETTERS

Healthy Politics

'The Conservative reaction to the twin crises within British medicine gives us clues about a more effective and acceptable model . . . overall staffing levels should be kept constant . . . budget restraints on health authorities should be maintained . . . principled objections to charges for services should be overruled. . . .' These selected quotes from Steve Iliffe's article (*MT* Oct) should convince most of your readers that he is headed well beyond the margin.

I'd like to comment on some of the assumptions on which his analysis is based. The liberal critique of medicine, Illich, Fuchs, and the newer generation of health economists, are now powerful influences on both Tory and Labour thinking, and they share these assumptions.

'It is costing more and more to get less and less benefit' . . . The two examples Steve Iliffe uses – hip replacement and heart surgery for angina – do not support this. Both techniques have shown dramatic falls in cost since their introduction. They are effective interventions, socially, functionally and economically for the individuals concerned.

Not all medical care is effective or beneficial, and tonsillectomy or taking out gallbladders might have been more appropriate examples. Nevertheless, each pound spent today buys medical care that is more effective than at any other time.

It is costing the British public more, a 2% increase in GNP in the last 30 years, but this is small compared to increases in the rest of Europe, and medical outcomes for the sick have changed out of all recognition in that time. It is costing more, but it is not true to say that the benefits are less and less.

Mortality Rates

Period	Infant mortality	% change in 10 years 5-9	20-34	45-64	75-84
1841-1871	+1	−7	−1	+3	+1
1871-1901	−3	−18	−18	−4	−4
1901-1931	−23	−16	−14	−12	−2
1931-1951	−33	−50	−33	−12	−6
1951-1971	−16	−16	−18	−5	−9
1970-1980	−36	−34	−11	−12	−10

'There is little evidence again that this increasing expenditure is producing comparable improvements in general health' . . . It is important to distinguish between the gains for an individual and improvements in the health of the population. The complete eradication of all cancer would result in an increase in life expectancy of only two years. But for the individual with cancer, the average gain would be 12 years.

For most age groups (with the exception of young adults), mortality has fallen faster in the past decade than at any other time for which records are available.

Nobody would dispute that social change has been responsible for the lion's share of this decline. But at least 30% of the fall in mortality in the last decade can be directly attributed to medical intervention. Much more could be achieved if the knowledge we now have was applied to the whole population.

'If nurse practitioners can do the same work as general practitioners at one quarter of the training cost and half the running costs, then a programme of professional replacement is necessary' . . . Trained nurses (and there are currently very few of these who have any training in adult preventive medicine) are invaluable and will hopefully be a growing feature of preventive work in the next 20 years, in the same way that nurses have been trained to take on new and highly skilled work in coronary care, intensive care and dialysis units. But they have not replaced doctors, and would do so only if they had comparable training and comparable resources with which to work: at comparable costs.

There is little to suggest that nurses' professionalism is any better or worse than that of doctors, and considerable evidence from the USA that they mopped up the cheaper end of the market in the already well medicalised cities (leaving the under-resourced countryside, for which they were designed, in the same state as they found it).

Steve Iliffe has become concerned largely with the cost of a fixed cake and has largely ignored needs and inequality, and in particular the central issue of class inequalities in health and health care.

The right wing of the Labour Party and even the SDP would think twice before following his prescription, which is based on false assumptions, is largely devoid of politics, and argues that we should stop the foolish arguments on principle for a comprehensive, freely available and equitable health service. ●

John Robson, London

1956

The interview with Eric Hobsbawm on 1956 (*MT* Nov) vividly recalls that traumatic year. I was among those who, still reeling under the impact of the revelations of the 20th Congress of the CPSU, felt most unhappy about the intervention of Soviet troops in Hungry and was opposed to our party's support of that action.

Those events did not, however, cause me to think of leaving the party because when I joined it in 1935 it was basically, of course, to work for changes in *British* society. Certainly the international aspects of the movement were important and, indeed, the anti-fascist fight in all its aspects was in the very forefront at the time; but our party was grounded in the history of our own working class movement and founded upon a marxist outlook, both of which were unaltered by events either in the Soviet Union or in Hungary; though it is true that the lamentable failure to analyse the cause of those events has left its deep – even unhealed – scars on international communism to this day.

I believe now that I under-estimated the complexity of the Hungarian situation: there was the heritage of years of fascist complicity; and not only had the generation that fought alongside the Nazis until 1945 certainly not died out by 1956, but Red Army occupation and a new régime imposed by the Soviet Union was hardly the way to 'win hearts and minds' or convert attitudes embedded in the national consciousness. Popular support the government did not have and did not deserve to have, for which the leaders of the party must be held responsible.

I am not sure that I agree that those who went out of the party in 1956 remained for the most part on the Left. But certainly there is a missing generation of communists, a fact that has had an incalculable effect upon the British Communist Party which, like other European parties, has still to come to terms with the changed world that succeeded the age of innocence: the certainties of pre-1956. ●

Yvonne Kapp, London

City Ambush

John Grahl and Bob Rowthorn (*MT*, Nov) provide an excellent summary of the gaps in Labour's economic policy. I would like to think that they arise from two considerations. First of all, the new marketing managers in Walworth Road may be seeking to avoid giving credibility to Tory attempts to make our flesh creep with their extravagant claims about putative Labour expenditure plans.

But more important than this is the uncertain relationship of the Labour Party with the City and its financial markets. These increasingly deregulated markets respond neuralgically to facts, rumours, mistakes in the data on VDU screens, and insignificant and meaningless statistics. The only way in which such markets can be kept under control, short of a return to fuller regulation, is for the government continually to surprise them. A puzzled City then responds in a divided and contradictory way to policy, and in that way it can be kept in order.

The problem that Labour has to a certain extent created for itself in the past is that it has behaved utterly predictably, and has received a predictable response from the City.

Therefore some ambiguity is necessary, and Roy Hattersley should be thinking now about how he will ambush the City when his first sterling crisis comes. Otherwise the City has the initiative.

Incidentally, I do think that John Grahl and Bob Rowthorn passed over an important contradiction inherent in channelling public 'support . . . to enterprises of all kinds through a range of national, regional and local agencies'. The economic and organisational problem for a future Labour government will be to ensure that decentralised social ownership does not leave it footing the bill for badly-thought-out and over-ambitious schemes of investment. A painful withdrawal from one of two spectacular schemes of this kind could be just as demoralising as an unexpected imposition of an incomes policy. ●

Jan Toporowski, London

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LETTERS

Reykjavik

Whilst I appreciate that Gerard Holden wrote about the Reykjavik mini-summit, within days (hours?) of its ending, his assessment of the 'Reykjavik fiasco' (*MT* Nov) revealed a deep academic cynicism that I found much worse than a disappointment.

Gerard continues to view Soviet actions through Brezhnev-tinted spectacles and fails to see that profound changes are occurring which open up greater prospects for peace campaigning and disarmament.

Not once in the article does he entertain the possibility that Soviet proposals are genuine or that disarmament is feasible. Instead he provides a variety of peripheral explanations for Gorbachev's *'handling* of foreign policy' (not recognising any change in *content*) – undertaken, according to Gerard, in order to convince 'domestic audiences' that his 'conciliatory policy towards the West had borne some fruit' and because he needs to 'revitalise the Soviet economy'.

Maybe Gerard assumes, as I do, that the Soviet Union wants peace and that this need not be stated. But, if so, it is hard to account for his dismissal of Soviet proposals for total nuclear disarmament with: 'Whether or not one takes literally the Soviet commitment to a nuclear-free world by the year 2000, in practice the situation has been such that this "utopianism" has always been likely to give way to the more limited arms control aspects of Gorbachev's proposals.'

On the contrary, I believe that past negotiations have shown that whilst arms control is relevant for obsolete or unusable weapons, it is not even a precursor to disarmament. The unfortunate acceptance of the blind alley of limited arms control by Brezhnev – and its inevitable corollary that military parity is desirable – has led to a cynical acceptance that disarmament is 'utopian' and weakened the effectiveness of the peace movement worldwide.

Thankfully, the current Soviet leadership has changed its attitude on these issues. Explaining the continuation of the Soviet moratorium on nuclear testing (since then renewed for a further six months), on 15 January this year Gorbachev stated: . . . 'If one were to follow the usual "logic" of the arms race that, presumably, would have been the thing to do (ie, restart testing) . . . that logic has to be resolutely rejected. Otherwise the process of military rivalry will assume gigantic proportions and any control over the logic of events would be impossible.'

The Soviet proposal to eliminate all nuclear weapons within 15 years is neither 'utopianism' nor public relations – it is more realistic than limited arms control because it eliminates two major problems:

a) No nation can feel secure whilst others possess weapons. As a result, the effects of all arms control agreements to date has been to *accelerate* the development of weapons not specifically included (eg, MIRV, Cruise).

b) It is difficult to verify how many weapons exist (especially if mobile and concealed) but relatively easy to check that all have been destroyed and that no more are being built.

That, in short, is the technical argument why total disarmament is a realistic route to world peace. But it also makes more *political* sense.

If you believe, as I do, that the military-industrial-complex of the USA and the West needs to be defeated *politically*, then the proposals put forward by the Soviet Union must offer a perspective for disarmament, not arms control, in order to win mass public support in the West.

Opposition to Star Wars and an end to all nuclear testing are two issues that have worldwide support and, if achieved, would remove the obstacles that prevented agreement at Reykjavik. For the first time in two decades, there is a real prospect that pressure from the peace movement could achieve a genuine disarmament agreement. We are not served by articles that mystify this issue. ●

John Cox, Gwent

Idle Fantasy

Bob Rowthorn and John Grahl's suggestion that the real incomes of 'the upper 50%, of wage and salary earners should be frozen for several years is a recipe for political disaster (*MT* Nov).

If Labour's programme restores manufacturing profitability, industrial workers will rightly insist on sharing in the proceeds of such growth. As private sector earnings accelerate, public sector workers will insist on similar pay rises. Previous attempts to dampen such wage pressure with an incomes policy have invariably failed after two or three years. But Rowthorn and Grahl offer no explanation of these failures nor any serious and detailed proposals for a future policy, and their reference to a wage and salary freeze as 'realistic' is a piece of idle fantasy.

But having alienated its organised working class supporters with an incomes policy, Labour is also supposed to sets its face against finance capital by the imposition of exchange controls. To imagine that a Labour government can simultaneously fight on two fronts against organised workers and finance capital is a crippling delusion whose dire results are all too predictable. At best it will be rendered impotent by its inability to control either; at worst it will turn, in Wilsonesque fashion, on its organised and militant trade union base. When *that* crunch comes are Communists seriously supposed to line up behind the anti-trade union Labour Right? ●

John Kelly, London

Yuppie Mothers

In Beatrix Campbell's article (*MT* Nov) she states that she does not 'condemn' the attitudes and behaviour of those 'Yuppie mothers (who) . . . buy some other poor woman's time.' Why ever not! Are we no longer supposed to condemn petit-bourgeois attitudes and behaviour simply because some of those views come from women who call themselves feminists?

I can see no socialist or feminist reasons for justifying private, consumerist solutions to public and political problems. The exploitation of working-class women by bourgeois and petit-bourgeois women has been present from the earliest beginnings of capitalism – but neither its longevity nor its presence in 'liberal' circles should allow it to escape the total condemnation of socialists.

I *do* condemn those 'yuppie' mothers (and fathers) – especially those who consider themselves 'radicals', 'feminists' etc – who exploit working-class women through private child care. They are as guilty as any other petit-bourgeois exploiter of adding to the misery and oppression of working-class women. ●

Nick Waterfield, Sheffield

Strikebreaking

I read Raphael Samuel's article 'Reopening Old Wounds' (*MT* Oct) with great interest. As one who would certainly identify myself with him as one of 'socialist conviction but conservative loyalties' I was painfully reminded of one especially treacherous act during the miners' strike: the profitable export of coal from Poland to Britain throughout the strike – perhaps one of the most cynical of strike-breaking acts of our decade, on an international level. A great contrast to the efforts of French workers who consistently supported the *miners and the families.*

I am a regular visitor to Poland, and the policy of the Polish government, reflecting an unprincipled opportunism, illustrates the sad degeneration of socialist ideals, where so-called trade unionists lose all their independence and become tools of the state. ●

Don Feasey, Lancaster

Cartoon: Nick Newman

PS

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No Light at the End of the Tunnel

Thatcherism has not had things all its own way since 1983. But it's still riding high. **Stuart Hall** argues the nightmare is far from over

The election wheels have begun to turn. The government has once again taken the high ground in the public opinion polls. The Chancellor's give-away bonanza has taken place. The press has greeted this as the long-awaited U-turn, but those with their political heads screwed on know that it is only a Z-turn: increase in public spending now, then the election, then back to the old-style monetarism. On this tacit understanding, the hard-liners have swallowed hard. It is good for 'presentation', good for pulling the rug from under the feet of Labour and the government's critics.

It is time to make an assessment. Where is Thatcherism now? How does it stand as a political force? How much have its recent troubles placed the whole political project in jeopardy?

Thatcherism is certainly in difficulties. It is a much less stable political formation than at any time since the period immediately before the Falklands war, when its popularity was at a very low ebb. Some of the reasons for this are immediate, others stem from deeper trends and tendencies. It is clear, now, that Thatcherism has not succeeded in stemming or reversing Britain's long-term economic decline. The manufacturing base remains in a collapsed state. The attempts at restructuring, while creating wholesale regional dislocation and generating a few 'sunrise' industries (mostly funded by imported capital), are extremely fitful. The cabinet continues to put a bold face on it – recovery is, as ever, just around the corner. Most people know they are whistling in the wind. The turnaround is not happening.

Politically, the impact of this is not so easy to assess. Thatcherism always told us that the road to recovery would be long and stony. It made no easy promises. Rather, appealing to well-founded British masochism (every summer of affluence, pleasure and permissiveness must be paid for by 20 winters of discontent), it promised, in the short term, only economic 'blood, sweat, toil and tears'. However, the message that even the long haul is not paying off has begun to penetrate popular consciousness and taken the edge off Thatcherism's drive. Of course, part of the message – that this is due, not to Thatcherite policies but to long-term, structural weaknesses in the British economy and world trends – has also taken root. And since there is a small, rational core to this proposition, it does not translate itself directly into a swing to Labour.

Secondly, in spite of the extensive manipulation of the figures (one of the government's undeniable successes) there is very little sign of a turnaround on unemployment. School-leavers can be shunted sideways by Lord Young into schemes with little prospect of full-time employment at their end; their entry to the dole can be delayed; a proportion of the marginal and long-term unemployed can be squeezed off the register. But the underlying trends *stubbornly remain unacceptably high.* This is a real setback, politically.

In the early days, Thatcherism succeeded in putting the fight against inflation higher than unemployment in the national agenda. Inflation has come down. And it remains in the background, as a sort of warning light. People are aware that certain kinds of reflation lead to inflation rates which erode their standards of living. However, in popular consciousness, unemployment is now a make-or-break issue. It symbolises the human and social havoc which has become monetarism's trade-mark.

Thirdly, in the areas of public spending and the cuts, we have witnessed perhaps the most dramatic turnabout of all. A majority favour more public spending even at the expense of lower taxes. Some recent figures published in the 1986 version of *British Social Attitudes* (Jowell, Witherspoon and Brook, *Gower*, 1986) suggest that this is a long-term not an immediate trend. It has been in progress since at least 1984 and affects Conservative supporters almost as much as Labour and Alliance voters. 'Only 8% of Conservative supporters opted for lower taxation if it meant less being spent on health, education and social security benefits. Overall, only 6% favoured such cuts.'

This is a major reversal – and the Chancellor's Z-turn on public spending clearly acknowledges it. It is important to note the particular sectors where this turn has occurred – health, education, social security. The NHS has been, from the very beginning of Thatcherism's assault on the welfare state, Mrs Thatcher's 'Maginot line' – the point where the cutting had to stop. Remember how early it was that Mrs Thatcher had to assure the country that, contrary to all appearances, the NHS was 'safe in my hands' (sick)?

Of course, the cuts and privatisation of services, where possible, continue apace. The new, private London Hospital shines forth like a glow-worm on the south bank of the Thames. Round the corner, operating theatres at Guy's Hospital are being closed. The deception that, because investment in the health service increases, it is keeping pace with either costs or needs, continues to be advanced. Nevertheless, the principle of universal health provision – one of the corner-stones of the welfare state whose basic structure Thatcherism set out to dismantle – remains intact.

Education now turns out to be another area of major miscalculation. Sir Keith Joseph seemed determined that he would pass into a well-deserved oblivion, fighting to the last drop of ideological blood to reverse post-war trends in education. His aim was to decimate higher education, harass the schools, reverse the 'permissive' re-

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Montage: Peter Kennard

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volution in the classroom and exploit the anxieties and worries of parents as a weapon to break the teaching unions and face down the teachers, as Mrs Thatcher had faced down the miners. What he forgot is that the majority of parents who were expected to provide the cutting-edge of this populist strategy have nowhere else to send their children except into the hard-pressed, crumbling, under-resourced schools in the public sector. In the end, their alliance with the teachers – a fragile one, which the teachers did not effectively consolidate on a long-term basis and which they would be ill-advised to regard as automatic – nevertheless held for just long enough to float Mr Baker, one of the new 'third force' Thatcherites (monetarism with a human face) to power.

'Every summer of affluence, pleasure and permissiveness must be paid for by twenty winters of discontent'

In spite of all that, the situation with respect to local authority spending is not quite so clear-cut. The erosion of the social fabric of the urban environment is now so widely acknowledged that local authorities are to get an additional £3.8 billion this year. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to assume that the drive against local authorities and local democracy (and, incidentally, Labour's strongholds in the large urban constituencies) is over. Mr Ridley, a flint-faced Thatcherite of the first phase if ever there was one, continues to exploit the rich vein of town hall unpopularity.

The rates campaign – 'spending *your* money' – continues, ideologically, to mobilise the 'ratepayer' in us all. The attempt to bring to a halt the rising needs and expectations of the inner urban constituencies (the welfare-dependent poor, especially women, blacks, the unemployed and the marginally employed, single-parent families, the low-paid unskilled) and redistribute power and wealth to the suburbs and the shires is part of a long-term reversal of the dispositions of welfare social democracy to which Thatcherism remains committed.

To complete this assessment, on the negative side, so to speak, of Thatcherism's current troubles, we must add the more immediate succession of errors, mistakes and other little local difficulties in which the prime minister has been ensnared in recent months (backing off on the sale of British Leyland, the Libya bombing, Westland, the loss of two ministers, etc). These have shaken public confidence in her 'mastery' of the political scene and weakened her political credibility.

In considering Thatcherism's troubles so far, we have been looking at important areas of policy where either it has failed to deliver or been obliged to change emphasis or even shift direction. But now we have to dig a little deeper. Thatcherism was never, after all, only a set of policies. It was always a whole political project, and radically novel political formation. How do we assess Thatcherism at this level, now?

In terms of this broader question, the most significant feature to my mind is the growing unpopularity of the whole authoritarian form of politics. This constitutes an important turning-point because, in the early days, strong leadership and conviction politics operated in Thatcherism's favour. Here was an end to the shilly-shallying of the old consensus politics: a regime with a clear political purpose, driven by a clear and alternative set of ideological goals towards a clearly-perceived – and radically different – end. This spoke to something deep in the political culture – a sense that only a radical rupture with the past and an authoritative leadership in a new direction was equal to the profound sense of unstoppable national decline.

'Authoritarianism' no longer holds this position in the popular imagery. The image of 'conviction' has been replaced by that of 'intransigence'. The government is seen as increasingly isolated, insensitive to the changing winds of public opinion, cavalier in relation to the trail of dislocation which follows in its wake, determined to 'press on regardless', so long as the parliamentary majorities hold up. An 'elective dictatorship' with a vengeance.

It is difficult to date precisely when this 'turn' occurred. Some pinpoint the brutal assault on the unions at GCHQ (which, after all, is staffed by thoroughly loyal, endlessly-vetted, 'sound' intelligence officers). Some cite the abolition of the GLC and the other large metropolitan authorities. Within its own lights, Thatcherism was perfectly correct to perceive that it was necessary to blow away the GLC as soon as it was convenient to do so. It always understood – as Mr Kinnock and the Labour leadership never have – the innovative character of the 'new politics' of municipal socialism and its 'demonstration effect' on the morale of the Left.

Nevertheless, abolition was a deeply unpopular move – unpopular with the majority of Londoners, with young people and the new social movements whom the new cultural politics had begun to address, with old-style Tories and their commitment to the balance between central and local government as a keystone of the unwritten constitution. It was even, for once, unpopular with the Alliance, which left the government, on this issue at least, totally isolated. In short, the abolition of the GLC looked what, indeed, it was: a naked exercise in political assassination.

We have been talking about the growing unpopularity of a political style. But this is no mere matter of style. Or rather, style is a more important issue than the Left believes. Thatcherism's 'authoritarian style' does not simply refer to the bossy, governess style of the prime minister, or the self-righteous way in which she lectures everyone in sight with her Finchley-spun homilies. It relates to the whole form of politics which has come to be part and parcel of Thatcherism's political project: the politics which we have learned to describe as 'authoritarian populism'.

Authoritarian populism was a way of characterising the new form of hegemonic politics which emerged on the British scene with the formation of the 'new Right' in the mid-1970s. It described a shift in the balance of social and political forces and in the forms of political authority and social regulation institutionalised in society through the state. It involved an attempt to shift the centre of gravity in society and the state closer to the 'authoritarian' pole of regulation. It attempted to impose a new regime of social discipline and leadership 'from above' in a society increasingly experienced as rudderless and out of control. However, the 'populist' part of the strategy required that this move to new forms of social authority and regulation 'above' should be rooted in popular fears and anxieties 'below'. Central to this movement – of which the drift into a law-and-order type of society was one clear index – was that the shift to greater social discipline should be made while retaining intact the formal paraphernalia of the liberal-democratic state.

The growing unpopularity of the more superficial forms of an authoritarian style of government, then, probably has at least two deeper meanings. The first is to remind us how deeply rooted democracy, in a broad sense, still is in British political culture and the limit this sets to any political force which attempts to push the long, historic, democratic gains of the British people back too far. The second is the evidence it offers of the problems which are beginning to beset 'authoritarian populism' itself. This is of the utmost importance, if it is true, and merits further exploration.

The engine of this 'authoritarianism' has been, in narrow terms, the cabinet (or the Thatcherite caucus within the leadership). But in broader terms, it is really a question of the state and the role which it now plays in Thatcherism's project. The Left sometimes finds the role of the state in the current period of Thatcherism hard to understand since it continues to represent itself, ideologically, as unremittingly 'anti-statist'.

Thatcherism's 'anti-statism' is no mere ideological fig-leaf. In relation to the economy, the state sector, economic regulation, the 'swollen' welfare state (swollen by so-called 'unrealistic' popular aspirations), it signified something real and profound – the project to reverse the postwar, Keynesian welfare-corporatist consensus: and the undiminished thrust towards privatisation and deregulation are there to prove

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it. But on *social* questions, Thatcherism in power has been the most 'interventionist' government of the whole post-war period. This is not a paradox.

It is possible to *use* the state, strategically, to *divest* the state. The idea that 'neo-liberalism' meant the abolition, rather than the *recomposition*, of the state was always an illusion.

The growing unpopularity of the authoritarian style finds its reverse side in the open manipulation of public opinion. Where a populist consensus cannot be won, it must be bludgeoned into place. The massaging of the unemployment figures by Lord Young's department is remorseless. Mr Tebbit is in charge of intimidating the media into line. Whatever is the truth of the Westland affair, nobody believes Mrs Thatcher has been speaking it. Not to put too fine a point on it, lying and double-dealing has become part and parcel of the politics of Thatcherism, as it has long been the hallmark of Reaganism.

Does all this mean, then, that Thatcherism has finally been blown off course? Before we jump to this conclusion, we must consider what is still on-going, still 'in place' in the Thatcherite project, despite its many little local difficulties. What, indeed, are Thatcherism's long-term prospects? Here, it will not do to remain solely on the ground of the immediate, electoral, tactical and conjunctural questions. We must try to understand how these conjunctural twists and turns relate to, in fact are rooted in, deeper trends and tendencies in the society.

Against Thatcherism's failure to turn round the economy, we have to set its success in reconstructing Britain as an 'open economy'. The move to flexible exchange rates, the free flows of capital, the leading place Britain now occupies in the internationalisation of capital tell an important story. Many of us still imagine that Thatcherism is aiming to restore Britain as a first-rank manufacturing capitalist power. We are waiting for the chimneys to sprout, the factory gates to open once more in the declining regions. The only problem is its inability to deliver.

The 'open economy' reminds us that Thatcherism is pursuing an alternative image of 'prosperity': Britain as an open playground or permanent 'green site' for international capital. This multi-nationalisation and internationalisation of capital, to which Thatcherism has hitched its star, for good or ill, is the most significant process going on globally just now. It is based on the opening up of the new financial markets, harnessed to the new information technologies. It is this which is lending the world capitalist system so much of its dynamic thrust, despite all its problems (like high, competitive interest rates and growing indebtedness).

This has some consequences, socially and politically. In order to clear the decks for this development, far from advancing the interests of the capitalist class as a whole, Thatcherism is driven to displace some of the older echelons in order to bring itself into line with the new social forces aligning themselves with these new developments. The political 'unity' of capital is neither given nor guaranteed. It has, continually and with difficulty, to be produced, politically. That is the basis of Thatcherism's 'relative autonomy' of class interests, narrowly conceived.

'Who cares if the Big Bang dislodges the grey-suited brigade of the City, if it licenses the new answer-phone young men of Merrill Lynch'

Hence the phenomenon of Thatcherism often moving hard against certain old, vested social interests, which it is obliged to dismantle if it is to harness to itself some of the new social forces. The big battalions of the CBI are reluctant allies. They are still attached to the project because of its political thrust in restoring the 'right to manage' and the primacy of profitability and efficiency. But they continue to hope for a little controlled reflation. They prosper in an 'enterprise culture'. But they have noticeably not availed themselves of the opportunity provided by the anti-trade union legislation to rush into court. The same is true of the 'older professions' – the solicitors, the estate agents, the old stockbrokers of the City, even the BMA, all blown away in a riot of deregulation.

These things open a path for what Thatcherism regards as the new, vital forces of capitalism: the small businessmen, the do-it-yourself conveyancers, the department stores willing to under-sell the NHS to provide optical wares, on the one hand; on the other hand, the new, young, managers and city-men, the paid-up subscribers of the yuppie international. Who cares if the 'Big Bang' dislodges the grey-suited brigade of the City, if it licenses the new answer-phone young men of Merrill Lynch?

Alongside that, and closely linked with it, we must acknowledge the relative effectiveness and continuing energy of the thrust towards privatisation and deregulation. The continuing *elan* of this part of the project cannot be attributed to any one cause. It generates short-fall money which can be turned back in the form of tax cuts just before the next election. It returns crucial sectors of the economy to the private sector, divesting the state.

It appears to widen share ownership, securing the commitment to what Thatcherism now calls 'popular capitalism'. (It is estimated that the sell-off of British Gas will bring the number of individual shareholders in privatised companies to at least 6-10m or 'an average of 10,000 to 15,000 voters in every constituency in the country with a financial stake in a Tory victory', as Adam Raphael recently calculated in the *Observer*). Privatisation continues to valorise the free market as the only source of energy, drive, goodies. It outpaces and makes obsolescent outmoded notions of the 'public good' and 'social need'.

Another important area concerns the attempt to root its political strategy in the growing fragmentation and the individualisation which increasingly characterises British society under the double impact of recession and restructuring. One tiny clue to this may be found in Thatcherism's use of differential incentives and selectivity to segment the older political constituences and to disorganise the opposition. This relates to Thatcherism's growing fluency in building directly on the crucial dividing line which now separates those in from those out of work.

One can find evidence of this at both the tactical and strategic level. Incentives for head and senior teachers have succeeded in 'buying off' the upper echelons from the mass of teachers. 'Selectivity in welfare' arguments are making deep inroads into the principle of universalism. Selective tax cuts buy off, in rotation, one minority after another. This may not look like a successful exercise in hegemony, but it is evidence of something else which may be almost as important: Thatcherism's capacity to constantly compose and recompose – to permanently rotate – the required social 'minorities'.

However, this is certainly not simply a matter of tactics. The strategy is rooted in deeper social and material realities. Fragmentation and segmentation are now deep features of the British society. The breaking down of traditional skills, the introduction of more part-time and flexible working, the decentralisation in the sphere of employment, the new 'home working', the penetration of new technologies, all drive individualisation ahead, break down social milieus and fragment the communities of skill and work typical of the older forms of industrialisation and the social identities and political solidarities typical of that phase.

This is what Peter Glotz has recently called 'the dark side of individualisation' ('Forward To Europe', in *Dissent*, summer 1986). 'An immense process of liberation has fragmented social milieus, put class solidarity in question, and forced politicians to toil at merging discrete groups into temporary "majorities".'

This begins to explain the paradox, which otherwise is unintelligible and the Left finds hard to understand. The fact that, despite the depth of the recession and scale of unemployment, a large number of people have been doing very well out of the recession. 'Despite the abysmal performance of manufacturing industry in the UK', Grahl and Rowthorn argued in the last issue of *Marxism Today*, 'real wages for those fortunate enough to keep their jobs have risen faster in the UK since 1979 than in *any other major Western country*' (my italics). This is 'prosperity for some, purchased at the price of poverty for others'.

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We are only just now beginning to glimpse the outlines of what 'Thatcherite Britain' might be like as a stable formation. Therborn described it (in the June 1985 issue of *Marxism Today)* as 'Brazilianisation': mass unemployment as a permanent feature; at the bottom, the permanently unemployed and the marginals, dependent on falling welfare entitlements; in the middle, the regularly employed, increasingly divided by enterprise, sector and hierarchy; at the top, the increasing wealth and incomes of capitalists and top managers.

Glotz speaks of the 'two-thirds society'. The social decline of the weakest third becomes a permanent feature – 'the unemployed, the odd-jobbers, the elderly of the lower classes, the migrant workers, the physically and mentally handicapped, the teenagers who cannot find their way into the job-market'. The rest, divided from the marginals by full-time work, the competitive society and economy with its privatised rewards. Ralph Dahrendorf has recently argued (in the Haldane Lectures) that, in such societies, the question of social discipline or the politics of law-and-order (which, in British society, is also a politics of race) becomes the characteristic form of political conflict.

Finally, we come to the crucial terrain of the ideological offensive. Here we have to address the recharged nature of what we might call Thatcherism's 'moral agenda'. The baton in relation to the moral agenda has passed from the front bench to the moral entrepreneurs and range-riders of the far Right. Mr Bruinvels and his cohort, inside the House, coupled to Mrs Gillick and *her* cohort outside represent a powerful, new, grassroots 'moral majority' pressing the all-too willing but rather more circumspect sympathisers inside Mrs Thatcher's inner circle.

These discourses about crime, law-and-order, abortion and sexuality, the position of women, sex education, homosexuality and social and moral respectability have always been key bastions of Thatcherite ideology. They have been 'manned' [*sic*] with renewed energy and vigour in recent months. We have had Mr Tebbit's sweeping attack on the 'permissive society' and – taking their cue from that – the massive 'moral panics' about homosexuality (fuelled by the AIDS scare) and drugs; then the mobilisation around school libraries and sex education; and, always, as a continuous subterranean theme, the restoration of the family, the bulwark of respectable society and conventional sexualities with its fulcrum in the traditional roles for women.

Parallel with this, in another part of the moral agenda, we have had the crude revival of cultural racism, which is now so powerfully organised around beleagured conceptions of 'Englishness', evidenced in the thinly-disguised scenes of barbarism over Asian visitors and visas. Thatcherism's 'tight little island' – culturally, sexually – is back in business with a vengeance.

This, too, may seem surprising, for it is highly contradictory terrain. There is no clear evidence that ordinary Conservative folk – let alone Conservative Party chairman – are actually giving up the so-called permissive society. It seems, from the scanty evidence we have, that this is even less the case with the younger generation. How, then, can we explain the discrepancy between what Thatcherite children are actually doing with and to one another, and what Thatcherite parents are represented as wanting or not wanting their children to be taught in schools? This is a continuing contradiction inside the Thatcherite sexual psyche.

However, Thatcherism does not need to organise the heart if it can organise the ideological terrain. The moral discourses of Thatcherism remain important, whatever the discrepancy between them and actual social behaviour, because into it a whole range of other languages have been condensed. It is the site for the mobilisation of social identities and, by appropriating it, Thatcherism has put down deep roots in the traditional, conventional social culture of English society.

Its capacity to do so, and thus to capture and bend to its political project some of the profound cultural formations of English society, represents the truly hegemonic character of its historical project. Nevertheless, this does not mean that it can continue to hegemonise the moral discourse of the society unchallenged. As contemporary cultural attitudes among young people increasingly move, in the aftermath of feminism, sexual politics and the cultural coming-of-age of young urban blacks, in one direction, and the public morality of Thatcherism moves the opposite way, this is likely increasingly to become a key arena of social contestation.

Thatcherism, then, has been obliged to change and adapt to a changing and difficult terrain. It has encountered some areas of genuine resistance and difficulty. It has had to some extent to recompose itself. But its long-term, fundamental political project is still, substantially, in place. Thatcherism has never been 'hegemonic' if by that we mean that it succeeded in unifying a major social bloc, 'winning the consent' of the great majority of the subordinate classes of society and other key social forces to a major task of social reconstruction. Especially if we conceive 'hegemony' as a permanent, steady state of affairs.

What we have always argued is that it had a 'hegemonic project'. It was designed to renovate society as a whole. And, in doing so, it understood that it must organise on a variety of social and cultural sites at once, both in society and in the state, on moral and cultural, as well as economic and political terrain, using them all to initiate the deep reformation of society. It has not achieved the goal of securing a period of social and moral ascendancy over British society, whose problems remain as yet too deep and intractable for such an enterprise. But it remains, by dint of a more 'directive' form of authoritarian populist politics, the leading force in British political life.

This is not the place to make a parallel assessment of Labour's alternative, but it must be said that, in comparison, the gains which the non-Thatcherite forces have made out of Thatcherism's troubles are extremely shallow. Presentation of Labour's case has improved. The Kinnock leadership has taken a firm, managerial grip on the party machine. The realigned Left has failed to establish an alternative agenda or to provide a powerful political alternative to the fundamentalist Left or the Centre-Right.

But politically, the so-called recovery has no depth to it. It still lacks an alternative popular politics or a convincing alternative economic strategy or a cultural politics capable of mobilising alternative social identities. It has become, technically, more adept at telling the electorate what is 'wrong' with Thatcherism. But it is not yet capable of convincing significant numbers of the unconverted or the disillusioned about what, in the last decade of the twentieth century, might be 'right' about socialism. In part this is because, though it has some plausible answers to the tactical and more superficial questions where Thatcherism has run into difficulties, it has no long-term, strategic stake in the deeper, and rapidly shifting, contours of British economic, cultural and social life into which, in its own contradictory way, Thatcherism has inserted itself.

From a more short-term perspective, it will not do to argue that it is the electoral split between Labour and the Alliance which is allowing Thatcherism to survive on a minority basis. It is now clear that, in the event of a close election, the Alliance would deliver as many votes to Thatcherism as it would against it. So far as public opinion in relation to immediate electoral prospects is concerned, on the question of Thatcherism (not Mrs Thatcher), the country seems split down the middle. Those who are not 'for' it are not very convincingly 'for' anything else. It is a sobering thought that, despite Thatcherism's many difficulties and the wave of revulsion against its narrow utilitarianism, the safest bet one could currently place is still on a *third innings* for Thatcherism, on a reduced but operational majority. The end of the nightmare is still nowhere in sight. ●

'The end of the nightmare is still nowhere in sight'

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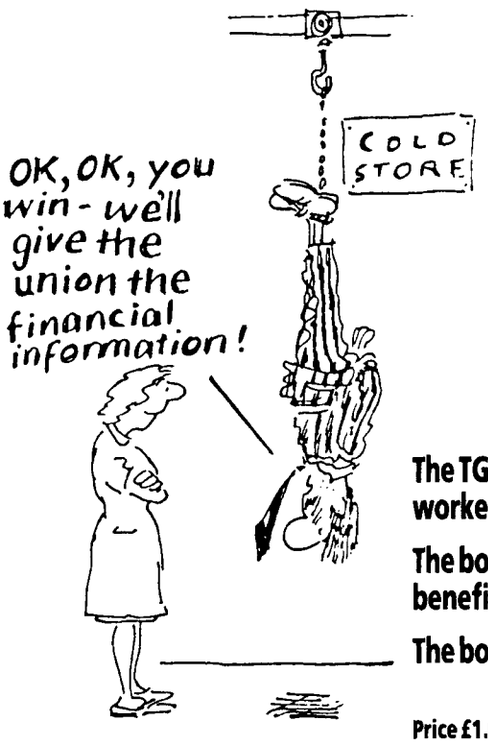

LETS TAKE ON THE TAKEOVERS

The TGWU has just published a booklet which demands positive employment rights for workers in a takeover situation.

The booklet calls for information and consultation rights and protection for pensions benefits and funds.

The booklet is available from Transport House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3JB.

Price £1.00 (free to members)

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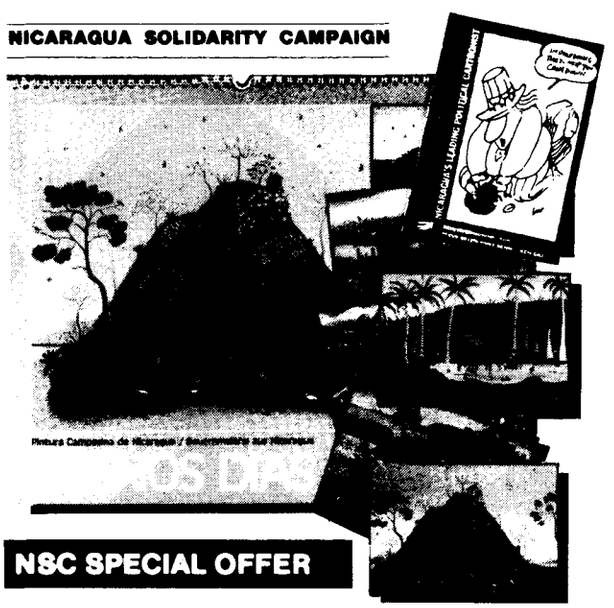

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Family Matters

A Roundtable Discussion

Morality is right there at the top of the political agenda. Put there by both feminism *and* the moral Right. And the family is at the centre of the argument.

The participants in the roundtable are: Beatrix Campbell a member of *Marxism Today*'s editorial board; Mary Kenny, an Irish Catholic who is a journalist and author of *Abortion – The Whole Story*; Valerie Riches a social worker who is now secretary of Family and Youth Concern; and Jill Tweedie who is a journalist and author of *Internal Affairs*. The discussion was chaired by Carol Lee who is writing a book on the family and morality.

Beatrix: 'Feminism is about trying to put the pleasure back into hetero-sexuality for women.'

Photography: Abel Lagos

What do you see as the major moral issues facing the family in the 80s?

Valerie I think it's best to talk personally on this. As parents, my husband and I found that society was feeding ideas to our children that were in total conflict with those that we hoped might help our children to grow up to be fulfilled adolescents. There was a conflict. We as parents try to explain to our young people the nature of the society they live in – a materialistic, competitive society, that wasn't interested in them as unique individuals, but saw them as to be exploited. We try to work through the values presented to them, or pressurised upon them. Outside the home thus, there were pressures that we weren't experiencing in the home as a unit, but which did make for difficulties in bringing up the children.

Bea, the issues as far as Valerie is concerned are the pressures from outside the family. What do you think about that, or what do you think the moral issues are?

Beatrix I can identify with Valerie's sense that the integrity of children, and indeed the integrity of parents, is besieged by all sorts of threats to it. But I've got another set of moral panics, if you like, which are to do with dynamics within the family. If you asked me what were the major moral issues facing the family today then I'd say incest, the epidemic abuse of children by men who are their relatives, and the sexual harassment that faces girls when they're at school. And I would add another, which we would all probably share, namely the challenge to parents of living with near adults – adolescent children – who they have to police, but who are also people that are very big, and very powerful, and have a life of their own, with their own secrets. I'm not a parent, but I have been an adolescent, and as a person who's now grown up I think back with a terrible dread about what I visited upon my parents, the sense in which they couldn't control me. I can understand parents' need to control, to police, to protect. I think that's a terrible moral dilemma.

Jill on the surface I agree with Valerie in that I do experience the pressure of an outward society, but I guess in a completely different way from her. To try to bring up a child who, to my mind, would have all the attributes of a person directly opposed to the society that we live in, is very difficult. The ability to raise a child who need not be competitive, need not be aggressive, need not be a success, and need not make money is extremely difficult to do under the pressure of the kind of society we live in. Being on the Left, it's difficult for me to understand why someone like Valerie, who politically supports the society we live in, feels the same way as I do about it. There are two other problems, in my opinion.

One is unemployment, which is putting a great deal of stress on the family – I watched a programme two days ago about women being battered by their unemployed sons. The other is experts: experts have become an all-pervasive threat to everyone. We have had so much confidence taken away from us, we feel we can't bring up our children without immediately taking every bit of that child, from the toe to the brain, somewhere, and saying 'what do I do about it?' The Spock syndrome.

There's that wonderful story when Doctor Spock woke up one morning and said 'Oh, I'm terribly sorry I'm wrong', and 3m mothers went 'oh'. Mary – the big moral issues facing the family as far as you are concerned?

Mary Historically the family has always been at odds with society to some extent. Ferdinand Mount's book, *The Subversive Family*, is very interesting on that. Beginning with the Christian church and ending up with the marxist state, on both sides there's always a desire to take power away from the family, and there's always a desire on the part of individuals and family members to wrench that power back and to find a way, in a sense, of keeping the experts, or keeping the state, or keeping the authorities, or the patriarchs, off your back. Thinking in terms of subjects like incest and sexual harassment, and growing up in Ireland in the 1940s and 50s – I'm going to be very reactionary and golden-ageish here – what I most remember is going to school alone from the age of four, or getting into motor cars with strange men, because I really rather liked motor cars when I was little, and no harm ever coming to me at all, I can't help looking back to a kind of society where, paradoxically, women and children seemed freer because it was safer.

What's changed that?

Mary That's also very complicated. All sorts of things have changed it: geographical displacement has changed it, the failure of the extended family – I'm not sure if I'm accurate here, because I'm not sure if in the South of England the extended family has ever been a going concern since the industrial revolution. But certainly in parts of the North of England, and in Ireland, the extended family was very strong and in some parts still is . . .

Beatrix But Mary, the evidence is not so much that sexual abuse of women and children has increased, but that the evidence has become public, and that the issue has been politicised, I believe by feminism. What is heart-breaking is the number of old women who for the first time can say, 'when I was five, ten, in my family, I was abused and raped, and for 50 years I haven't been able to tell anybody'. The golden age never was. It is in your imagination, and it's in my imagination. Would that it had been there. These are things that are to do with conflict and power within the family. In other words the family is no safer than anywhere else. The question is: how do you make the way in which men, women and children inhabit domestic spaces together safe for everybody?

Mary Of course all these things have always gone on. But what we have to consider, in terms of ordinary mothers' lives, is that mothering was a lot easier when you didn't have to accompany

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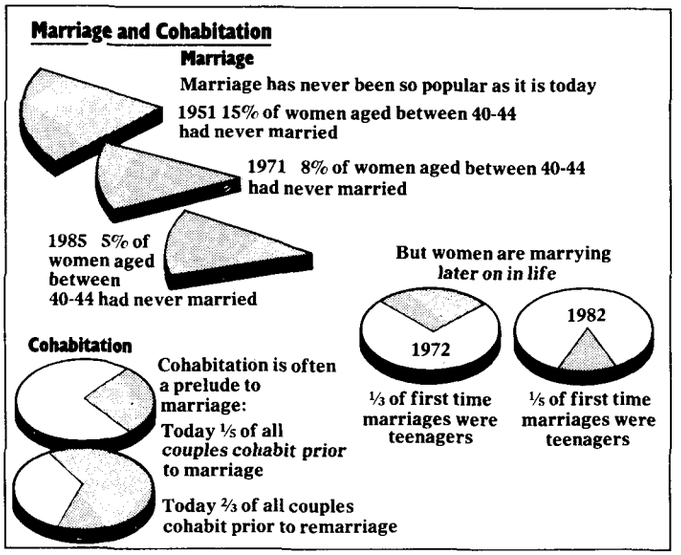
The Family Story


Marriage and Cohabitation
Marriage
Marriage has never been so popular as it is today
1951 15% of women aged between 40-44 had never married
1971 8% of women aged between 40-44 had never married
1985 5% of women aged between 40-44 had never married
But women are marrying later on in life
1972
1982
⅓ of first time marriages were teenagers
⅕ of first time marriages were teenagers
Cohabitation
Cohabitation is often a prelude to marriage:
Today ⅕ of all couples cohabit prior to marriage
Today ⅔ of all couples cohabit prior to remarriage

Remarriage: Remarriage has increased also. The rate is, however, about 3 or 4 times higher for men than for women.
1972 20% of marriages were remarriages for one or both partners.
1985 35% of marriages were remarriages for one or both partners.

Divorce: Divorce rates have risen massively since the 1940s. Of those children born in 1946 it is estimated that 6% had experienced the divorce of their parents whilst still children. It is estimated that for children born in the 1980s 20% are likely to experience the divorce of their parents whilst still children.

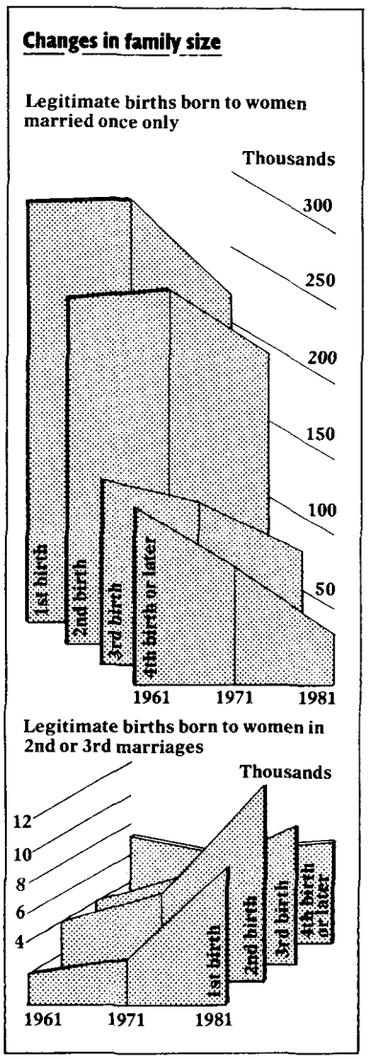
Children: 90% of married couples have children but family size is declining. This is in contrast to an earlier generation where, for example, ⅓ of those over 65 years either had no children or have no surviving children today.

Illegitimacy: Illegitimate births have increased in the last decades:
Number of illegitimate live births:

1961	48,000	*(6%)*
1971	66,000	*(8%)*
1981	81,000	*(13%)*

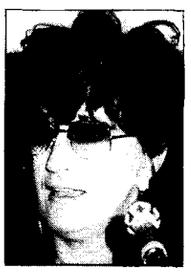
(% of all live births)

Since 1981 the number of illegitimate births have increased tremendously. They now comprise 20% of all live births. There has been a particularly big increase in illegitimate live births to teenagers:
In 1980 43% of births to teenage mothers were illegitimate.
In 1985 69% of births to teenage mothers were illegitimate.
However, nearly half of these births were registered in the name of both the mother and father and ¾ of these gave the same address for the child.



Diagrams: Tony Garrett

Sources: Social Trends 1985, *Central Statistical Office*. Population Trends No 45, *OPCS*.



Jill: 'Experts have become an all-pervasive threat to everyone. We have had so much confidence taken away from us, we feel we can't bring up our children.'

children everywhere until they were 12 as you do now. A lot of women in their 40s – my age – don't recall having to be accompanied absolutely everywhere.

Mary I didn't quite understand you. Are you saying that mothering is easier now or then?

Mary No, harder now, because we are more isolated with our children and we also have to protect them much more. The idea that you have to accompany and to constantly monitor – things like the murder of small children terrifies mothers. And in a way that has something to do with the freedom of women because women have less freedom to fulfill themselves because they have to police their children.

Valerie I want to support Mary on that. Both of our children have been abused outside the home. There's a very real problem of the sexual abuse of children. I don't think you should necessarily blame the home entirely for it. It's not all within the home.

Jill There's no doubt that such things as incest and sexual harassment have been going on since the dawn of time in families. But it hasn't made any difference at all to the strength of the family. And I think that's the most important thing we have to look at. Because if any of us have any ideas about reforming the family we have to ask ourselves why the endemic abuse within the family has not at all broken the wish that people have to live in families. In the 60s the feeling was that the commune was the way to escape from the nuclear family – indeed I experimented with that myself, as probably we all did. Then it seemed so much better to choose your own family – a family of choice rather than a family of birth. The problem has been the old cliché that blood is thicker than water. Not in any particularly nice way, but simply that the choice of a family demands too much from human beings, or at least did at that time.

If you choose your friends you have to be extremely careful, and you can then also be rejected, which is a much worse experience. The terrible, and at the same time great, thing about the family is that you get a response. What that response is, is less important than the fact that you get it. That your mother rings up and abuses you every week is a response. And you may not get that at all from the outside world. So really, if one is talking about ways of making the family work as a more supportive thing, I don't think there is any alternative except to widen it in some way.

What you are actually talking about is attention . . .

Jill Yes, attention. The real response is simply response: that you know about your family and they know about you:

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they have a blackmail hold. One way or another, no matter what you do, you know. And some people only face this when their parents die – they pick up the phone and suddenly realise there's no-one at the other end who, for whatever reason, and however they are going to react to it, is going to be interested. Even if they're going to abuse you for what you've done, they're going to be interested. To replace that with an extended family on a relative basis, yes OK, but to try and replace it with relationships that you make yourself I think went down in the 60s.

Beatrix And the idea that you can abolish the family, which was the corollary to what you are talking about, is patently daft. It's fascinating listening to what you're saying because I completely recognise the description. What is fascinating about families, and I feel it about mine, is that my relationships with my family are very passionate, and I hope they will last all my life; but also they're very messy. It is all blood and guts. And actually, that's fine. Now I would rather have that account of the family, as both passionate and painful, just like life, than this idealisation of the family, that it is something safe, comfy, whatever. Because the idealisation falsifies the hard labour of families as well as the passion of families.

Mary: 'I have a benign view of the family because my extended family, my cousin kinship relations, are quite wide.'

Valerie Family life is full of dynamics and problems. But I think what is happening now is an attempt to say it is all negative, and all bad. I think what is happening, and is good, is more realisation of the problems in the family. That's good, but we mustn't then condemn it all entirely. When you have children you go through the traumas of adolescence and then find that when they're growing up and getting married your relationships with them are cementing. There are different levels of relationship that you work through. It's not all bad.

I don't feel we have to have the family as blood and guts or the family as a real possibility for change and enlightenment as opposites. It may be possible to have those two as part of the same.

Mary There was, for me, a definitive essay by G K Chesterton on the family in which he said the point about the family was not that you love all your family, not at all. It's that they are all very different, and you may have nothing in common with some of them, except the fact that you happen to be related to them. So it might be more mind-broadening to have to listen to boring Aunty Edna who is not interested in the theatre but is interested in something else, because she happens to be your aunt. If you go and choose your friends you will choose all your peer group, you will choose only the people who share common interests with you. He was thinking of a larger family I think than most of us probably have today. He was thinking also – and I've always found this important – of aunts, uncles and cousins, that they introduce you to a different kind of world. And I have a benign view of the family because my extended family, my cousin kinship relationships, are quite wide. And they're doing all sorts of different things.

At the same time, when it comes to the bottom line, the family does try and keep you in line. There is a social conformity there, from the early stages. I hear myself saying to my own children things I swore I would never say like 'please don't behave badly. You'll let us down'. And 'Please don't act like a spoiled brat. OK, I'll get you a Mars bar later, but please . . .' And even when you're an adult, you still feel this conformity, not to let your family down in some way. And of course the socially useful side of that is that it helps people to get on in the world.

Beatrix I'm worried that we are going to get into a polarisation about are you for or against the family. And that isn't the conversation that we need to have. We have to see the family as an arena in which struggles happen. We may define them differently, but what we share is a notion that the family is part of the territory of life that we have to address, and is part of politics. And just as an aside, when I said blood and guts, I feel about blood and guts that, rather like menstruation, you have to learn to love it. I didn't mean by blood and guts that this is something that is to be washed away, but that family life is a complicated, messy, rational and irrational business.

Valerie All human relations are. All groups of people are complicated in their own hates and loves. All these things are going on all the time. I don't really think we are in opposition to each other.

Have there been any changes in your moral positions or your moral concerns about or within the family, between, say, 20 years ago and now?

Valerie I think we've all learnt a lot from the expectations of the 60s. You know, there was going to be the world of glorious new freedoms and there weren't going to be any problems if everybody did exactly what they pleased. I think people are beginning to realise that some of the consequences have not been what we expected in the 60s.

What was the change in your moral values, Valerie? Is there anything you were thinking in the 60s about morality and the family that you've changed your mind about now?

Valerie Well, I have to say that at that time I just hadn't thought. I realised that I'd gone through life without thinking, and I thought through a lot of issues and arrived at some conclusions.

So morality has come on to your agenda in the last 20 years?

Valerie Yes. It's a good thing that came out of the 60s because it started to make people think again instead of enjoying a lovely materialistic society.

Jill what about you? Have there been any changes?

Jill Well, perhaps regrettably few. I always thought that the family was important So that hasn't changed. I have altered, to some extent, in that I no longer really feel that children do flourish when too many years separate them from their parents. Obviously there has also been a change in the sense of fathers taking more responsibility for children. There was something that in the 60s was not perhaps thought about quite like that; it was that women should move out – 24 hour creches being one of the first demands. And one of the problems about that was that it gave the women's movement an image of women who were not concerned about children; which can't be helped, because each movement starts for certain reasons and you don't think everything out to start with. But in that I do feel that I've changed.

Mary, what have you changed your mind about?

Mary Well, everything of course. My analysis of the family when I was a young woman was that it was patriarchal; I guess it was partly the way I perceived authority, the authoritarian patriarch. I suppose that much have come to some extent from my image of the church. Also from the law and all the rest of the structures of society. And it also came from the kind of reading that interested me very much at that time, the whole feminist analysis of society as being a patriarchal plot against women. To be honest, I now see the family more as a matriarchal institution. I really do think that most women want children, that it's very hard to bring up children in a sort of vacuum, and so therefore you need some sort of support group around you. It seems to me that women tend to create the family.

So you're suggesting that women are more geared to providing a family environment than men are?

Mary I think you could just as easily argue that the family is a prison for men, even more than it is a prison for women. I'm not sure that men really get the same rewards out of family life.

Why not?

Mary I don't know why not.

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Beatrix Because they're not in it.

Mary It might be partly biological. It might be to do with the fact that reproduction for the male of the species is actually a very simple act which is very quickly over. If you look at the animal kingdom that's the way it is. And males are considered irresponsible for that reason. Therefore I think part of the reason why we make a bit of a fuss about the man in the family is that they don't get the rewards of family life. A third of divorced fathers never see their children again.

Bea, have you changed your mind about the major moral issues in the last few years?

Beatrix Yes, more in terms of shifts of emphasis and different priorities. I agree with what's already been said about the difference in attitudes to children and childcare. The problem in the 60s was seen in terms of not having children, or you solved the problem by putting the kids somewhere else. Whereas the problem is a society that can't accommodate children and makes women alone totally responsible for them. There's also been a change in the sexual problematic. In the 60s the arguments were around chastity for women . . .

That's come back now.

Beatrix Yes. I think that has to do with people's reflections upon the sexual pleasure that was promised to women by the abolition of chastity. One of feminism's great contributions to the whole business about sexual politics was to get inside what happens after chastity is abandoned and the discontent that women feel with normal heterosexual life, the lack of pleasure for women. Feminism is about trying to put the pleasure back into heterosexuality for women, and indeed for women to design all sorts of other forms of sexual pleasure for themselves. And I think that wasn't clear in the 60s. Certainly for me, getting it was what the 60s was about, and subsequently it was about reflecting on why that was so disappointing. And now all of us have to re-engage with how we put women's desire and women's pleasure at the centre of sexual discourse.

What do you feel feminism has contributed to the family? And would we prefer now that it had contributed something different?

Jill When the feminist movement began in the mid-60s, you started from a position where women were in the home and were expected to have and take care of children. So obviously you started at the level of getting women out of the home, or at least not being solely responsible for children, and not having to have children. In other words, having a choice about it. The problem was the image that then developed of women who didn't want children. It would have been marvellous to show feminists as being very pro-children. Not necessarily your own children, but children as a life form, which Britain is very bad at anyway. I don't think the women's movement helped in that. If feminism could have been seen, or can in the future be seen, as more pro the life of children, that would be very important.

Valerie: 'For many women being a wife and mother is a deeply fulfilling experience.'

So you're saying that initially the women's movement, in establishing women's rights to have lives of their own, had the effect of excluding children . . .

Jill Yes, children ended up down the plughole. And it had to be so, because if women are the centre of the family, if women have children, then women must establish their own freedom first. You could say that by establishing your own freedom, you are making some steps towards happy childhood.

Isn't the idea of being a woman with a job in conflict in some way with the idea of woman as all-provider, the all-nurturer. Those two seem so opposite. How can we bring those two ideas, which are both important, together?

Valerie For many women, being a wife and mother is a deeply fulfilling experience. I'm all in favour of women developing themselves intellectually and emotionally to the fullest extent. But we shouldn't diminish the woman who sees being a wife and mother as their career. When it comes to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, there's nothing really positive said about the importance of that career, of being a wife and mother. All the benefits go to women who join the labour force.

Jill The problem is that women have been forced in the past to have no other career than being a wife and mother, we have been told for years that that is what we are uniquely fitted to do. The women's movement tried to overcome that attitude, that our vocation was to have children, that we are uniquely fitted for that, that you have a particular talent – not that all women who have wombs can produce children. It isn't a question of just having children because you're a woman. You've got to fight that, and then come back to it, and say, 'I wish to be a mother because I long to be, because it is something I am going to be extremely good at'. And that means that society must not pressure women into having them simply because they've got wombs.

Mary Germaine Greer says that it is important that we realise that the feminist revolution and the sexual revolution are not exactly the same thing. There is a tendency to conflate these two things, best illustrated by Clive James' famous quip in which he said, 'I'm all in favour of the birth control pill. It puts more pussy on the market'. There was a notion that the feminist revolution, the sexual revolution was simply to make more women more available to more chaps like Clive James. That's one area where the complications are beginning to show now, for example in the questioning of pornography, where it's a lot more than just Mrs Whitehouse. Now there's a second problem which is to do with birth control and abortion. When feminists claimed very affirmatively and indeed very successfully that they had a right to choose, the answer has been that if you have the right to choose you also have to take responsibility for your choice. Now in a way that enables any society, and certainly Mrs Thatcher, to say: 'If you choose to have children, that's your problem. Don't come to the government asking for creches, child support, family allowances and all the rest of it'. Because it's been a privatised choice. Children have been privatised as well as everything else. And we have to face the consequences of that action.

If you think about that responsibility in relation to abortion, Mary, what shocked me recently was to hear a doctor say that abortion was only a social and political issue, that it was not an emotional issue at all. That shocked me because I have heard too many women saying, 10 years after an abortion, 'That was the day when that child would have been born'.

Valerie That's a lovely example of male chauvinism, because in this choice, and women's right to choose, women have taken all the responsibilities and they've also excluded men's responsibilities to a very great degree. Feminism has slipped up here I think.

The Left never seems to feel very at home discussing the family, does it?

Jill There is a feeling always when you're discussing the family that you are giving ground to the Right. What has happened, and why we have Thatcherism, is that the Left has left out a great deal under the slogans. It's all very well to talk about the working class, but it does not actually attach to people's unconscious. Mrs Thatcher has managed very well, has waxed upon the irrational and the unconscious fantasies and fears of people. I'm not saying that the Left has to work on those things in exactly the same way, but we've got to come to terms with just how deep some of those things are, and not to consider that we can analyse them all in terms of Marx and Engels. We all know those analyses. We are trying to get away from them not because they're invalid – they're absolutely valid – but because there's something else, a combination let's say of Freud and personal experience. Otherwise we'll go on for ever in an empty sort of way.●

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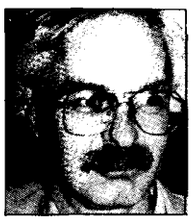
Journey To Pretoria

In the summer of 1984, South Africa entered a new phase. Quiescence was replaced by rebellion, stability gave way to instability. The black majority was no longer prepared to go on in the old way. In this interview with Jonathan Steele, **Joe Slovo,** chairman of the South African Communist Party and the only white member of the ANC national executive committee, discusses where it will all lead.



Everybody following the situation in South Africa believes that at some point there'll have to be negotiations between the black majority and the regime. Do you see any sign at all that the regime is prepared for serious negotiations?

We've reached the end of a phase in South Africa as far as the prospects for negotiation are concerned. Botha failed to sell his package of reforms, which really amounted to a form of power-sharing without relinquishing white control, the blacks clearly wouldn't bite, and the outside world was not convinced. Today the Botha regime has neither the will nor the constituency of support to make any kind of bold leap forward. In the recent period the reform noises have become more and more muffled. The tactic of the regime now is to dig in and mobilise the armed forces to occupy the black areas, to act with the use of the gun rather than dialogue. We can expect a move away from the idea of negotiation if it ever meant anything, and towards more use of the big stick, both internally and against neighbouring countries.

One of the new developments in the last two or three years is the way white business has started to talk to the ANC and to urge Botha to open negotiations. Beyond these verbal pressures from business, do you see any sign that white business is prepared to put on its own internal sanctions against Botha to force him to move? In any case, does it have the power to do that if it wanted to?

Sections of white business might have that desire, but I do not believe they have sufficient political clout at the moment to do very much about it. By and large, the liberal sector of the power bloc has got no effective political constituency either among the white community, nor the black community. Those forces within the white power bloc that are ready to go a little further are in limbo. They have no firm base with which to move in this direction. They are a hostage of the very forces which they helped historically to create to serve their earlier accumulation needs.

On the black side there is a stated willingness to negotiate at some point. What are the minimum concessions that Botha – or the white establishment, however it turns out to be constituted at a later stage – would have to make in order for the ANC to be prepared to sit down and talk to it?

It's become clear in the recent period, from the statements of Oliver Tambo and other ANC representatives, that the bottom line is that there must be an acceptance of the principle of majority rule in a unitary, democratic state. If there is a genuine acceptance of this principle, then there is much that can be tossed about, including constitutional mechanisms for safeguarding the rights of the individual, the relationship between private and social property, the kind of economic set-up during the interim period and questions connected with the language and cultural rights of the various groups. But there can be no compromise on the question of majority rule in a unitary state. That, of course, does not preclude a delegation of certain regional powers. We do not regard our emphasis on unitarism as a threat to the historically evolved cultural and linguistic heritage of the South African nation in the making. Mechanisms for ensuring this can also be talked about.

What are the characteristics of the present phase of black resistance which mark it out from earlier phases? And is this really the last phase? Is this 1917 or is it 1905, or perhaps something even earlier than that?

The country has been in flames since about August 1984. In spite of the inevitable oscillations in the intensity of the upsurge, the momentum of resistance has, broadly speaking, sustained itself without any real abatement. And it looks like continuing to do so. Two psychological barriers have been permanently breached and this breach has transformed the situation.

On the side of the people there is no longer the centuries old feeling of impotence. They know now that it can be done and it will be done. And they are prepared to sacrifice life to do it. And when this happens a social force becomes unstoppable. This is what has happened in South Africa. On the side of the ruling power bloc and its support constituency in the white community, there is no longer the conviction, which was there for so many centuries, that they could hold on in the old way. They know they cannot hold on for very much longer. And when this happens to a ruling class it triggers off fragmentation, defections, in-fighting, and other symptoms of disintegration. There are the early signs of this happening in the ruling power bloc.

Now the resistance on the side of the people is being sustained by a combination of factors: the mood of confidence in the ultimate outcome, to which I've alluded; the mass organised forces which have emerged on the ground at community level, and regionally and nationally in powerful mass organisations such as the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and the United Democratic Front (UDF); the increased strength of the ANC presence, including the ANC political underground; and the escalation in the recent period of armed blows which have had an enormous inspirational impact on the people, particularly the youth.

The question is: will it abate? I believe the signs are that it will not. There may well be moments, sooner or later, when less activity is visible as a result of the tightening of the regime's iron grip in this or that area. But it will inevitably burst forth again. Of course we should not underestimate the brutality, and the pure state terror power, that can still be unleashed by the regime. But this very process of attempting to deal with the situation by pure and escalating force can also become counterproductive for the regime.

The state, the economy, even the armed forces, cannot be run without the majority, and in the end you cannot govern in such conditions, in a permanent state of siege. The black ghettoes which are being occupied are, in any case, the pools of labour for the white cities. They cannot be made to serve this purpose for too long by a policy of occupation, shooting, killing and maiming. Therefore there is a limit to the

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Joe Slovo: 'On the side of the people there is no longer the centuries old feeling of impotence'.

regime's capacity to continue engaging in greater and greater terror against the people. The question is, where will it all lead to, what point is it going to reach? As far as we're concerned, it should lead to Pretoria. We are on the road. It may take time, but we are embarked on this journey in a completely new situation and a new context. Although the other side is by no means at the point of collapse and still has enormous resources to mobilise and sustain itself, the situation has within it the seeds of a much swifter transformation than we can imagine if we only assess the statistics of the current line-up. The situation is very volatile.

Are there not also elements within the situation which could delay the process into the unforeseeable future? It's not like Iran or the Philippines where sections of the ruling group, and particularly the army and the police force, are beginning to lose heart in the exercise of repression. All the major power centres on the white side are still holding firm, as you said at the beginning. So what gives you such cause for confidence in the short term?

Apartheid, as an extreme form of racism, has a momentum of its own. But its foundation is the privilege and material benefits which have accrued to most members of the dominant white community. The crisis that is occurring in South Africa – the resistance, and the internal and external economic consequences of that resistance – is threatening this foundation of racism.

Two responses are possible to it. One scenario is that there will be a fight to the death. The other is to make the best of a reality. I believe that if the people's pressure is sustained and also outside pressure is sustained, then less and less of the ruling power bloc and its white constituency will choose this first option of fighting to the death. What is being eroded in South Africa is the material foundation for apartheid.

What about the armed forces?

Even their armed power is becoming more and more dependent on the black forces. The majority of the police are black. The regime cannot substantially increase the size of the army without roping in black soldiers and black collaborators. They cannot run this country without the very objects of their domination. That is their dilemma.

You've talked throughout as though the black majority is united, and clearly psychologically they are united against the concept of apartheid. But ethnically, sociologically, economically, there are divisions within the black majority which the government, in some cases subtly, in some cases brutally, is trying to open up and exploit. Are you confident that the black majority can be held together in the face of ethnic differences, the conflicts between generations, the conflicts between the black middle class and the black

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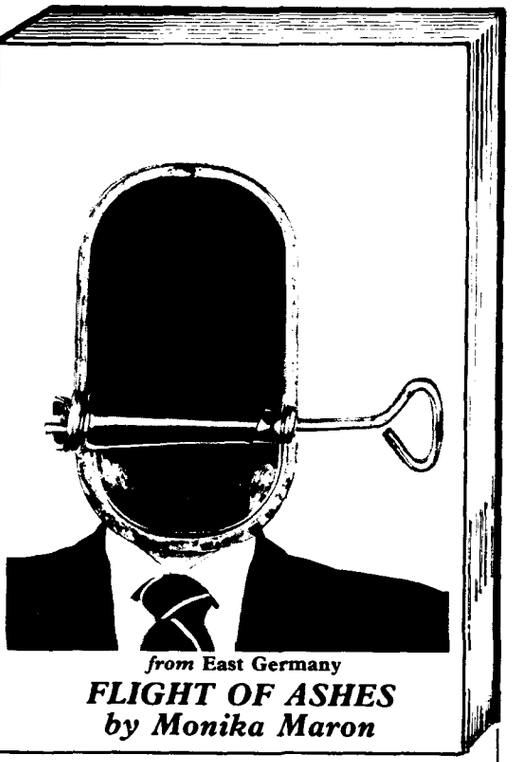

from East Germany
FLIGHT OF ASHES
by Monika Maron

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unemployed township dwellers, between the so-called vigilantes and the comrades, and the enormous geographic separation of the black communities in large parts of the country which makes it hard for them to stay together?
The events of the last two or three years have shown in general that the tendency is towards unity rather than division. The black population, nationally considered, has never been as united as it is today. There are certainly divisions. But there is no situation which attracts the unanimous support of even the class or group in whose interest the struggle is being waged. It would be unnatural. There are divisions, they do manifest themselves, and they do need to be taken seriously, because as the conflict heightens the demands of unity become more and more important, more and more imperative. But let us just remind ourselves – much of what is described as division is a result of direct enemy activity. For example, the conflict between the fathers and the comrades in the Crossroads area recently has demonstrated beyond any doubt that the regime created this mercenary group for the purpose of destroying the squatters camp.

But it was successful.
It is possible to hire mercenaries and be successful with arms and weapons. It doesn't prove mass support. It just proves that the police were able to create a group, prepare the way for them, stand on the sidelines, and if there was any danger, step in themselves. That's what happened at the Crossroads. This was clear from the press.

But aren't you just accusing the regime of being unfair, which of course we know they are already? The fact is, a large number of blacks were prepared to collaborate with the police rather than with the squatter inhabitants.
Yes. There are 20,000 black policemen who are collaborating with the regime. They are paid to do so. We are not suggesting that we have a population of saints, people who under all or any conditions will never move over to the other side. It's unreal. It's unnatural. It's never happened anywhere in any struggle.

Another example is the single men's hostel in Soweto, which houses the frustrated single Zulu workers who are from time to time unleashed on progressive sections of the population, based on reports which are given of anti-Zulu activity. The enemy has also infiltrated organisations like AZAPO, and under the t-shirts of AZAPO and other organisations of that sort, has begun to encourage political conflicts in the UDF. There is also an organisation like Inkatha, which has been virtually transformed into a paramilitary force which is serving the regime on every possible occasion.

We must also take account of differences based on ideological divisions. For example, there is a National Forum which competes with the United Democratic Front for mass allegiance. It doesn't believe the UDF goes far enough in the struggle for socialism, which the National Forum believes is a fundamental question even at this stage. Then there is the problem of competing trade union centres. COSATU could overnight be a million strong and not 600,000 strong, if some of the other trade union groupings like CUSA were to join. Yet in October of this year a competing federation has been formed under the name of CUSA/AZACTU.

What are the tactics that have to be adopted at this stage in the struggle? Is it predominantly a question of strengthening trade union organisation in order to move towards increasing strike action, possibly a general strike? Is it to try and firm up control within the townships, to prevent the police being able to enter them? Is it the question of the armed struggle? What is the relationship between these different forms of resistance at the moment? What is the leading edge of the resistance?

Pressure has got to be maintained in all these areas because in a sense all these areas form one mosaic of struggle. But of course each of these sectors faces its own special task. For example, in the townships the fundamental task which faces activists is to maintain the black ghettoes as virtual no-go areas for isolated policemen and collaborators. At the moment the regime has the power to occupy these areas, but not to govern them, and it can only have a presence there when it enters them in force. The people's committees and other embryonic institutions of popular power that have emerged, must obviously be consolidated in the face of these emergency conditions, and they must be spread. And of course it has become more and more vital because of the emergency and the way the enemy is dealing with these new popular forms for underground organisation to take a deeper root.

As far as the armed struggle is concerned, ways must be found to escalate it. That means the supply of weapons, the training of personnel and the strengthening of a people's army. Now that's got to come more and more from inside the country. The forces are there on the ground. Thousands of young people have actually organised themselves into combat units. What is required at the moment is leadership and materials. But the elements are there. There's an army of thousands ready to respond and act in all the main black areas in the towns and villages.

Another aspect of the armed struggle is the need for combat to become even more visible not only in the black areas but also in the white areas. This is not a policy of attacks against civilians. But the average white has been completely unaware of the conflict which has been taking place in the black areas. The white soldiers go back after having done their dirty work to their white areas. It is important that people who have been the backbone of support for the regime and who have been living in relative security and safety in South Africa should now begin to fear what the future holds for them, as a result of action on our part against targets in the white areas.

It sounds as though you are talking about a campaign of bombing in white civilian suburbs.
Against enemy targets.

What do you mean?
Police stations, against economic installations.

Supermarkets?
Economic installations. I do not have in mind civilian-filled supermarkets as a legitimate target. We have not changed our policy towards civilians. It is not our policy to attack civilians as civilians. What we have changed is our approach to attacking genuine military targets. In the past we have been inhibited by the possibility that civilians might be injured as a result of an attack on a military target, and we are becoming less and less inhibited by that factor. In other words, we are not allowing the presence of civilians in the vicinity necessarily to prevent us from embarking upon an action against a genuine military installation or against a target which it is legitimate for us to attack as an armed force of a liberation movement.

Until now you have never tried to assassinate top military or political leaders. Is that because of a lack of ability or because it wasn't part of your strategy?
It's not been part of our strategy. We've not embarked upon a general policy of individual assassinations. People themselves have dealt in some of the black areas with policemen, with collaborators and informers, and we believe that what they are doing is in the interests of the just struggle in which we are engaged. But we don't believe in general that a struggle of the sort in which we are engaged depends upon the assassination of a particular political leader, or a particular commander or police chief.

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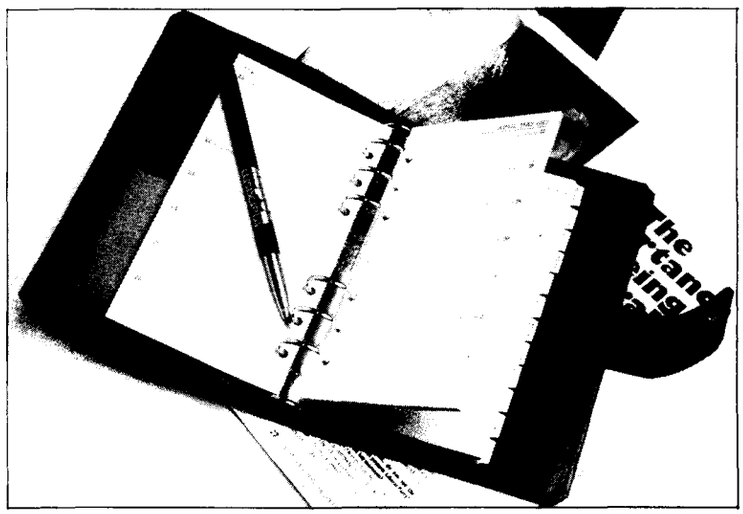

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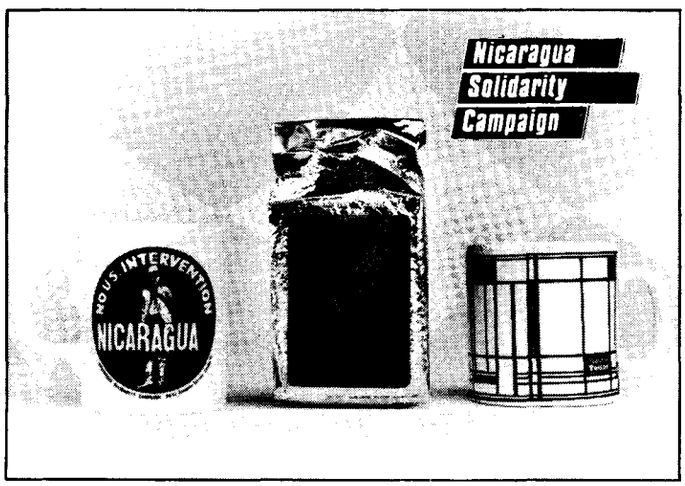

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I'm not saying that's never going to happen, but this is not the main thrust of our armed strategy. It is to engage and deal with the enemy's armed personnel, to weaken the economy by blows against important installations.

You've been talking in a sense both as a member of the national executive of the ANC and as chairman of the South African Communist Party. What is the role of the party, given that many other liberation movements have been successful without the need for a separate party?

The answer in one sentence is because there is a need in South Africa to work for the ultimate achievement of a socialist South Africa. And I emphasise the word *ultimate* because the main content of the immediate struggle is centred on what our programme describes as the national democratic revolution, which involves the winning of people's power based on the broad demands of the Freedom Charter.

'There's an army of thousands ready to respond and act in all the main black areas in the towns and villages'

In regard to these immediate objectives and the strategy and tactics connected with their achievement, there is broad agreement between the African National Congress and our party. We virtually think alike on the immediate needs of the struggle and where we are going and how to get there. More especially we both agree on the basic forces which have to be mobilised in this phase of the struggle, which involves the mobilisation of all classes and groups from among the nationally dominated majority.

But, despite this similarity of approach, we as a communist party have a special responsibility, both in relation to the immediate struggle and to our objective of socialism. We regard ourselves as the class party of the working people. And we have a special historic responsibility to ensure that this class, the working class, plays its rightful part in the alliance of class forces which the immediate struggle demands. It's necessary to ensure that the working class and its aspirations are not swamped by other social forces who may see liberation as consisting solely of replacing the white face by a black one in the seat of exploitation.

The ANC is an expression of the class alliance. It is a national movement embracing all classes and groups within and among the black oppressed, and is now even open to democrats among the whites who are prepared to make common cause with it. The ANC cannot, and should not, tie itself to the aspirations of that single class which we communists say we represent. And it is the party's function to assert and jealously safeguard the role of the working class in the alliance at this stage, not in some future millennium.

But apart from this there is still the socialist perspective, which although not on the immediate agenda of the struggle, cannot be filed away until the so-called first stage has been reached. As far as we are concerned as communists, there is no Chinese wall between the first stage, so-called, and the second stage, so-called. The revolution is going to be a continuous process, and it is our task to make sure that even at this stage we continuously place before the working people the long-term perspectives of socialism, the vital connection between the whole concept of national liberation and social emancipation.

The ANC Story

1910: South African act of union between British and Boers excludes all blacks from becoming MPs.
1912: Formation of ANC.
1921: Formation of South African Communist Party.
1944-45: ANC leads anti-pass campaigns.
1948: National Party comes to power. Apartheid becomes institutionalised.
1950: Banning of South African Communist Party.
1955: ANC launches Freedom Charter.
1956: 156 leaders of the ANC and its allies are arrested and charged with high treason.
1960: National anti-pass campaign. Sharpeville massacre. ANC declared illegal. State of emergency declared.
1961: All African Conference, led by Nelson Mandela. Country placed on a war footing to smash nationwide strikes. ANC goes underground. Organises acts of sabotage against government installations. Emergence of armed wing of the ANC.
1962: ANC leaders including Mandela captured and sentenced to life imprisonment.
1967: ZAPU and ANC guerrillas cross the Zambesi into Rhodesia.
1969: Morogoro Conference, ANC moves towards the idea of a revolutionary people's war.
1972-73: Student and trade union organisations formed, and engage in boycott and strike actions.
1976: Soweto massacre. 900 schoolchildren shot, in the bigget protest ever. Disturbances spread nationally.
1984: Beginning of the present unrest.

Its detractors say that the party is predominantly white, predominantly exiled, and predominantly made up of people of the older generation who were active in South Africa before the party was put underground and made illegal. How true is that?

Both the ANC and the party, after the destruction of their internal organisation in the post-Rivonia period, were for a time predominantly exiles. What we have today inside the country, as far as both the ANC and the party are concerned, was rebuilt from exile. This is a process which I believe has been the experience of most movements which have gone through periods of fascist repression, where the leadership has had to move outside for the purpose of reconstructing and reorganising. It is certainly what has happened in South Africa.

Today, inside the country the party's presence is evident in all kinds of ways. I think people here watching television have seen in the past year or two how, on most of the occasions when the mass of people get together, the flag of the party is raised beside that of the ANC. This is not a fortuitous happening. It is some kind of evidence of communists and their influence. Our underground presence continues to grow.

As far as the social composition of the party is concerned, it is not true that it is dominated by minority groups. The party's leadership and rank and file reflects the social composition of South African society. The overwhelming majority of our central committee and political bureau is black. And this is the position with the vast bulk of the members among the workers and among the youth who have joined us since 1976 in the post-Soweto situation.

Historically the party has had close links with the Soviet Communist Party. But recently you led a delegation for the first time to China. What is the political significance of that?

I think it is a positive event in the sense that two parties, our party and the Chinese party, which for so long have had no relationship at all, have reached a point where they can get round a table together as comrades, to discuss and exchange views about the situation in China and the situation in South Africa on the basis of complete independence and respect for one another's views.

What has been the impact of the tremendous upsurge of black resistance in South Africa on the rest of Africa?

It has sharpened their understanding of who their international allies are, and it has sharpened their appreciation of the true character of Western imperialism. In other words, it's had a radicalising effect on many states and top leaders in Africa. For example, it's had a most important effect on someone like Nyerere. The realisation is slowly dawning on those who might have doubted it in the past that there is no way of achieving real independence, real national sovereignty in Africa, without the elimination of the minority regime in South Africa.

Now although at the back of their minds a lot of African leaders obvious-

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ly in the past had an inkling that that might be so, the events of the past three years have demonstrated beyond any doubt that there is no short-cut for them on the question of, not just our future, but their own future in relation to South Africa. So long as this regime continues to maintain its grip on our country, there will be no peace and no stability; there will be no possibility of a free choice of social system by any of these countries, certainly those on the borders and within the sub-continent.

South Africa is, after all, being used by those who have decided long ago that Angola and Mozambique must basically be destroyed because of their choice of a socialist path. In both cases we know what enormous damage has been caused and what enormous anguish has resulted for the majority of the people by the action of South Africa in creating, sustaining and supplying mercenary groups, and from time to time going in themselves and bombing, killing and destroying.

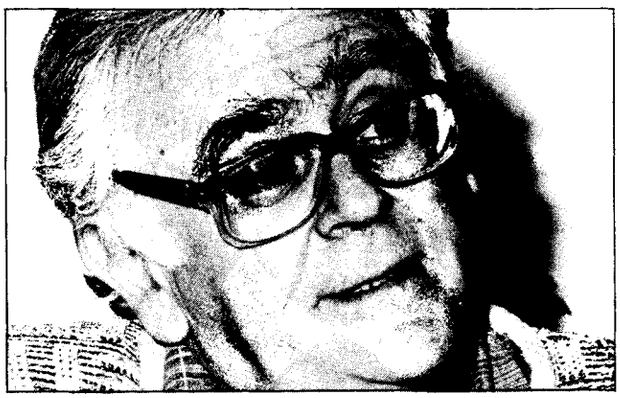
What has been the impact of the years of independence in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe on your view of the struggle in terms of the type of society, the priorities and the tactics which you would adopt after winning power?

I'm sure there are things that can be learnt. The Angolans and the Mozambicans themselves have begun to learn from their own experiences and mistakes, as we all do. I believe that one of the clichés we must avoid about a future South Africa is the one that is so easily thrown about by the far Left in our conditions, of the immediate leap forward into an egalitarian socialist millenium as the immediate consequence of the destruction of the racist state.

We are going to face the most enormous economic complexities in South Africa, which will require a really delicate balance to be achieved between a number of imperatives. Among those imperatives is the need to begin to change the relations of production while continuing to supply the people with their daily needs and ensuring that the economy does not fall into chaos.

These two imperatives are not always harmonious ones, although ultimately they are. But we know from the experience not just of Angola and Mozambique, but from most socialist countries, that the inheritors of power have of necessity to utilise the skills, the techniques, the collaboration even, of those who have previously been class enemies, because by virtue of their talents, they can help to prevent serious economic dislocation. While many of them will remain enemies and cannot be used, I believe that in our situation in particular, with a relatively advanced sector within the economy, there will be a great need to ensure the involvement of those who have shed the racism of the past, and who are prepared to come over on to the side of the people, in order to help maintain a certain rhythm without which chaos will result.

This implies that I don't believe we can envisage the possibility of sudden socialisation of all the means of production, and the abolishing of private enterprise at all levels. I believe there will be a mixed economy in the post-liberation period, in which in particular the black middle class, and small black bourgeoisie, will come into their own in the sense that they it will have a very important role to play as supporter of the liberation struggle in helping to build the economy, to ensure that we are able to cope with the demands of the people. But it is equally clear that a people's government must take charge of the country's resources



and cannot shirk the task of a major redistribution of wealth, especially as far as the monopoly sector is concerned.

Putting it simply, you're suggesting that Zimbabwe is closer to the model you expect to follow than either Angola or Mozambique?

The model Zimbabwe followed was the model imposed on Zimbabwe in the Lancaster House talks. I'm not sure they would have followed precisely that model . . .

I'm talking about the economic strategy adopted in Zimbabwe rather than the voting mechanisms.

I wouldn't like to make that comparison. We are going to have our *own* model. In a sense, I don't believe in simply following models.

I know there are diplomatic issues involved, appearing to criticise Zimbabwe or whatever, but I think it is an illuminating way of suggesting the sort of priorities and economic strategy you would like to adopt, and what the pitfalls are that you can learn from other countries.

Yes, certainly we ought to study the Zimbabwe model a little more. I can't say I'm an expert on what's going on there. One thing that is certain in our conditions is that we will have to satisfy the urge for land without destroying the large rural industrial complexes, which are really massive rural factories. The redistribution of the land is the absolute imperative in our conditions, the fundamental national demand. It will have to be done, even if it involves some economic cost, in order to continue to mobilise the people whose support has brought the democratic forces to power.

So it's a rather complex sort of chemistry – it's not just a matter of what is statistically right and what is theoretically right. It also depends very much on how we come to power. Are there going to be liberated areas? Which forces are going to play what role? It happens in every real revolution. One can make a few general remarks like I have made, which are pretty obvious in our situation, but that's about it.

Let's end by talking about the role of international pressure, sanctions and boycotts. How important are these things beyond the purely psychological dimension of indicating international support?

Every struggle has an international dimension. The impact of outside solidarity on the eventual ending of the Vietnam intervention is still fresh in our memories. In the case of apartheid, external pressure has a build-up potential which is perhaps unique because it is an issue which cuts across the world ideological divide. I don't think it is unrealistic to imagine an escalation of economic isolation to a point which effectively contributes to a change of direction by our ruling circles with less blood-letting than we can otherwise expect. I have already mentioned the relation between apartheid as an ideology and its roots in super-profits and the economic flesh-pots which most whites have enjoyed.

Limited as it still is, the reaction of Western capital has already had a damaging effect on most parts of the economy. Measures recently taken by giants like General Motors to withdraw from their operations in South Africa will obviously add to the trauma facing our captains of industry. If I could transpose an aphorism connected with General Motors, it undoubtedly follows that what's bad for Botha and his support base is good for us.

Our experience has been that when people outside take even the smallest action against apartheid, it has an enormous inspirational impact. When you face an enemy as strong as ours, the feeling that it can be challenged is very much reinforced by the feeling that you are not alone, that the world is on your side. I remember in the early sixties how inspired all of us inside the country were when British dockers refused to handle a South African cargo on one occasion. Of course, the non-delivery of some crates of Outspan oranges won't, on its own, be the end of the world for the South African economy. But it has an inordinate impact on the resolve of those who count and the Mandelas and others fighting inside where the ultimate battle against apartheid will be won. ●

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Sixteen: Sweet or Sorry?

You might think that 1986's teenagers are different, that the old sexual stereotyping in jobs is beginning to break down. It's not. The picture, in fact, is all too familiar. And the reason, **Cynthia Cockburn** suggests, has a lot to do with sex.

Photo: Katalin Arkell/Network

True love is not something on which marxist theory has ever had much analytical purchase. We have had more to say about the labour market than the marriage market. Yet the two are closely connected even among the up-and-coming generation of today's sixteen-year-olds. Young women have two expectations as they leave school. One is that they will earn their living. The other is that they will meet the right young man, fall in love, marry and have children. Inevitably the two prospects are connected. Young people's 'choices' of occupation are affected, even directed, in part by the social futures they anticipate.

For all this our perception of young people's occupational decisions rarely overlaps with our understanding of adolescent subcultures. We tend to see young people (and ourselves, for that matter) either as workers or as lovers. It is supposed that the workplace is somehow a sphere of pure economics while sexuality walks the streets or snuggles up in bed.

It is not only that we relate to working colleagues as sexual beings but that our working identity itself is gendered. Most jobs, like heterosexual romantic attachments, confer and call for an unequivocal and demonstrable femininity or masculinity. To be a 'good' secretary you have to have a compliant manner, a gentling telephone voice and unladdered tights. To be a 'good' maintenance engineer it helps if you see oily clothes and injured extremities as a badge of honour. To be a boss is to be authoritative. Jobs are gendered, like people.

The fact that jobs are gendered helps perpetuate a sexual division of labour – people tend to opt for jobs of their own gender. Conversely, the fact that, say, men are in men's jobs makes the jobs seem masculine. Employers have a clear-cut profit motive in treating women as a cheap source of labour and designing some of their jobs as clearly 'for' women. Since, however, the macho jobs are the better paid and more prestigious, men as men can be assumed to have a vested interest in such a system too.

The result of the self-interested endeavours of both employers and male employees is a very high and persistent degree of occupational sex-segregation in Britain. In 1984 for example, 73% of clerical and related workers, 76% of catering, cleaning, hairdressing and other personal service workers, were women. And this greatly underestimates the true extent of segregation. The more closely one defines occupations the greater the separation between the sexes that comes to view. The few men in 'women's work' are identifiable as filling distinct niches within the broader groups: the senior stylist in the salon, the chef in the kitchen.

This kind of sex-typed pattern of work is usually put down to tradition. The implication is that things are changing and young people will be found to act differently from their elders. It is disturbing therefore that the figures of trainees on the Manpower Services Commission's Youth Training Scheme show young people apparently making exactly the same choices as the generation before them.

With the exception of catering, each of the 11 'occupational training families' used by the MSC has a distinct gender. Only 21% of all the young male trainees on the Scheme in 1985 were to be found in the three female-dominated groups, while a mere 5% of all female trainees were to be found in the four most male categories of occupation. A closer look in one London area showed that even this greatly understated the true sex divisions. Of 2000 young women, no less than 82% were in office work or hairdressing. Of building trade trainees around 2% were female.

The MSC's video for school leavers, and its glossy brochures and Saatchi and Saatchi advertising, which had in good faith tried to put across the idea that all kinds of placement were for either sex of young person, had clearly failed to induce many school leavers to be pioneers on the gender frontier.

I recently talked with more than 70 YTS trainees, young women and young

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men, in the London area. My aim was to find out what circumstances or pressure in YTS were causing this age-old sex-stereotyping to recur even among today's 'post-equality' adolescents. One cause was equally old-fashioned sex prejudice. For all its high-sounding commitment to equal opportunity on YTS, the Manpower Services Commission was not putting it into practice in monitoring its schemes.

The guidelines from the MSC to its local programme teams during YTS' first three years did not include equal opportunity among the criteria for approval of managing agents or evaluation of schemes. There was no provision for mandatory in-service training in sex and gender issues for MSC staff, for managing agents or for sponsoring employers.

The Commission under Peter Morrison's political leadership had been set against positive action for young women in YTS. The Department of Employment's lawyers had besides given a conservative and contentious ruling that it was not permissible under sex-equality legislation.

Individually many of the women and men delivering the Youth Training Scheme – MSC officers, YTS managing agents, supervisors and instructors – were concerned to see so much sex-stereotyping in the Scheme. Most felt however that there was nothing, within the remit of the Scheme, that could be done about it.

Their concern was lessened by the fact that young women seemed in other ways to be doing well – more young women than young men were going into the preferred employer-based schemes, and more were getting jobs afterwards. The fact that young women received one kind of training while young men got another could be said to be setting them up for highly unequal futures. Yet it was not interpreted as a question of inequality at all, but as a question of *choice*.

Had more young women wanted to enter male occupations the blame would have shifted to employer discrimination. As it was everyone was tending to say, 'Young women have made up their minds by 16. They are set in their ways. It's not for us to push them into something they don't want to do.' This in one way was benign. It reflected the permissive client-orientated philosophy of youth and careers work. Yet paradoxically it was not doing young women a service. It would have been better to be asking *why*.

The only way to get an answer is by listening carefully to what young people say and watching how they behave. What becomes immediately apparent is that they do not believe and have no reason to believe that the world is their oyster for the picking. The choices that they appear to have made have, in the first place, been whittled down to least-worst options based on an early experience of class and race inequalities. These inequalities are all too clearly manifest to them in school achievements, or lack of them, in family work history and in the expectations of their friends and acquaintances. Beyond this however the choices take account of the realities of sex. Sex-stereotyped choices are essentially sensible choices from the point of view of gender identity.

Imagine what it is like to be what is laughably called sweet sixteen, just emerging from the concrete clamour of comprehensive school. In school it is friendships, enmities and the dramas surrounding these that have filled the space where teachers idealistically expect study to be. Researchers who have spent time with teenage girls, like Christine Griffin and Sue Lees, have demonstrated that how you are seen and how you see yourself is of overriding importance. They have also shown that the self-image in question is a *gendered* image.

What matters more than anything, more than honesty, sobriety or intellect, is successfully performing the balancing trick between sexual desirability and good moral standing. It is boys that call the tune, of course. But girls, as they dance to it, hold each other into line. Girls as well as boys label girls as available, 'slags', or as uptight, 'drags'. You can avoid one epithet by incurring the other, but to avoid both you have to be some boy's steady, someone's missus already. Boys of course are under the heterosexual compulsion too. The quality they most admire in each other is an ability to pull the birds while remaining a man's man, unattached and unmoved.

The girls and boys produced by such a culture of course have little in common. Girls value one set of things (true love, marriage, caring, partnership) and boys value quite different things (the respect of other males, sexual freedom, female servicing). Anne Stafford worked and trained among 16 and 17-year-

'Since the macho jobs are the better paid and more prestigious, men as men can be assumed to have a vested interest in such a system too'

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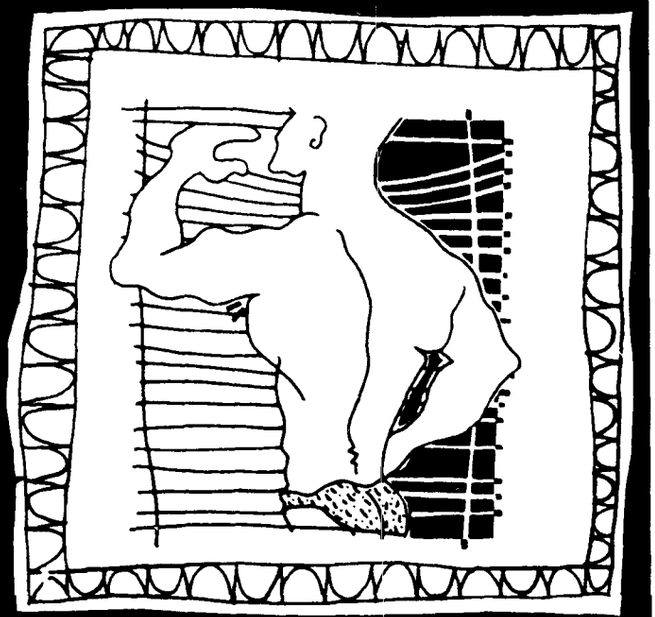

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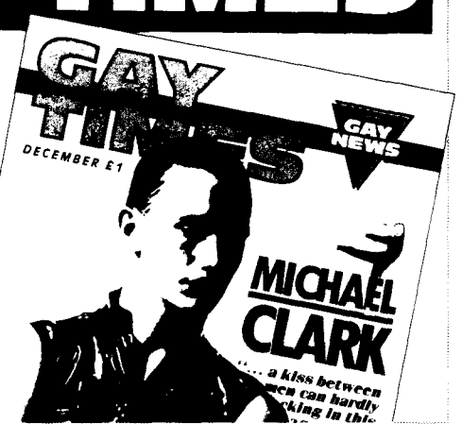

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'The end looks less dead if you can glimpse the shadowy outline of Prince Charming waiting there'

Photo: Katalin Arkell/Network

olds on a YOP scheme for five months. She never heard a boy in all that time refer to a girl except in terms of sexual objectification. No girl was ever referred to as a person.

Now consider the reality, as a young woman confronting the careers officer and that short list of jobs, slightly longer list of YTS places. Suppose she asks for a non-traditional opening: in electronic engineering perhaps, or printing; as a garage mechanic or plasterer. Disregard the response she is likely to get from the CO (it may be welcoming, more likely discouraging) and think rather of the first days in training or at work. How does the feminine identity, so carefully nurtured and so necessary to viable friendships, survive the masculine clothes, the unfamiliar tools, the male environment and the men themselves – young colleagues, adult supervisors?

All studies of young women in gender-contrary jobs show them caught in a contradiction. On the one hand they may be sexually interested in men, wishing to be considered desirable. In this case they will inevitably be dismissed as incompetent at the job, possibly labelled 'slag'. If they do form a sexual relationship they will find it impossible to combine with the job (which, remember, has its own gender).

On the other hand they may not care or appear to care about men as objects of romance. They may concentrate on the job. In this case they forfeit a feminine gender identity and may be labelled 'tight' – or lesbian. 'Thinks she's one of us', an unpleasant young man said to me of a young woman on his printing course. And he added with a snarl, 'Right little bruiser!' If the young woman is a lesbian (or even if she is not) she will be lonely for lack of female company. *That* is all in the knitwear section, the hairdressing salon or the typing pool.

In contrast to all this confusion, a proper woman's job, conferring its own femininity on the person who does it, seems a reassuring place to be. Norma Sherratt found the pursuit of glamour to be the best way of explaining girls' apparently self-damaging choice of dead-end jobs. The end looks less dead if you can glimpse the shadowy outline of Prince Charming waiting there. It helps if your workday image is not out of sync with your evening looks. The boring, exploitative workplace itself is less unendurable if it can be thought of as a possible place for romance. It is in this sense that the marriage market and the labour market interact for the young.

For beyond the hope of romance is the idea of marriage. This too has a bearing on job choice. Since young men of this generation show few signs of changing *their* domestic intentions, since they show no signs of developing the skills of caring for babies, the ill or elderly, young women have to accept that they will be the ones to pick up the burden. They already see their mothers and their older sisters shouldering it. A job that fits in with that prospect, as most kinds of women's work and fewer kinds of men's work can, is doubly sensible.

In the light of all this, to exhort young women to train for engineering, or building, or business management seems somewhat disrespectful. It is suggesting that women are timid, or silly or blind. It is asking women to do all the changing and adapting. Is there not instead a way we can change young women's realistic circumstances?

There are signs that the Manpower Services Commission itself now realises the shortcomings of what has been primarily a marketing approach. It is embarking on a modest scheme of single-sex schemes for young women in male-dominated occupations; reserved places for young women to create a sex-balance in a handful of schemes; chances for young women in some projects to 'sample' non-traditional occupations before making their choice of training scheme.

It is worthwhile, then, thinking through the principles that might guide positive discrimination for young women on YTS, or, in another form of training or in work. We have to develop strategies that move us from equality of opportunity, equal access, to similarity of outcomes and achievement.

Somehow the human relations involved in training have to change. In the first place there is need for more clearly-defined and protected women's space – single-sex schemes are good, but so would be assertiveness sessions and self-defence for girls. There is already a small proportion of young women coming onto YTS who view with real distaste the compulsion to take on the expected roles at home and at work. They deserve far more support than they get: female role models, other young women for company, counselling and encouragement. Men's trades and occupations need detaching as far as possible from their male associations. So long as the craft ethic has a grip on the workshop it is difficult for young women to feel it belongs to them.

The Manpower Services Commission gives a considerable part of its trainees' labour free to employers. Some form of *quid pro quo* is called for, a system of 'contract compliance' that would require employers to alter work relations in their firms as a condition of receiving trainees. While jobs inside the workplace are gendered, and women and men have different and unequal career paths and prospects, trainees' experiences and choices are bound to reflect this. They want to feel they are training for real, existing jobs.

Changing young women's circumstances of course means, ultimately, changing young men. Men are a highly significant factor in young women's environment. Adult men in YTS, who have often arrived there from the business world or from male crafts, need patiently retreading.

Sixteen-year-old boys are a different problem. There is an ethos of 'fair play' among young people today. Both boys and girls are ready to say 'it's up to him' or 'it's up to her' what a person chooses to do. The philosophy however is completely contradicted by actual behaviour. Young people make conventional choices and make it difficult for each other to do otherwise.

Until young men's actual behaviour changes, the way they relate to their girlfriends, the way they relate to their young women colleagues, the entry fee for young women wanting to take up male work will continue to be too high. There is an argument to be made for positive action in YTS being positive action for young women but positive action *on* young men. That is the only way, in the long run, young women can hope to get both of the things they want: a choice of interesting, well-paid, skilled jobs *and* a choice of workable sexual relationships. It is not, after all, so much to ask. ●

The research described here was funded by the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Economic and Social Research Council. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of either body.
References mentioned in the article are Christine Griffin *Typical Girls?* Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985; Sue Lees *Losing Out* Hutchinson, 1986; Norma Sherratt 'Girls, jobs and glamour' *Feminist Review* No 15, 1983; and Anne Stafford *Trying Work* PhD Thesis University of Edinburgh, 1986.

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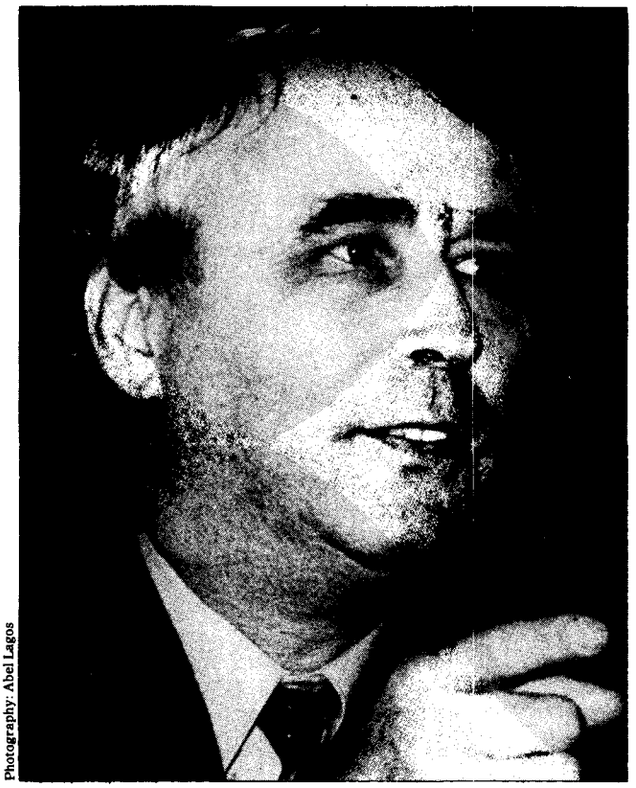

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Life After Reykjavik

The opening session at *Marxism Today*'s Left Unlimited in November brought together Denis Healey and Fedor Burlatsky to discuss East-West relations post-Reykjavik. Fedor Burlatsky was a leading aide to Khrushchev and now enjoys a very close relationship with the Gorbachev administration. He was a member of the Soviet team at both the Geneva summit and the Reykjavik mini-summit. Denis Healey is the Shadow Foreign Secretary. We print below their opening statements.

Burlatsky: 'I believe in new thinking, not only in my country but in Western countries too'

I was in Reykjavik and first of all let me tell you I was disappointed, very disappointed. Because we had a feeling after the first day that there would be an excellent agreement between Reagan and Gorbachev. But I was not shocked because I have taken part in many such meetings over a long time and I can understand what happened from the historical point of view. But in my opinion the position of both sides came closer than at any time in the last 25 years, certainly since John Kennedy.

Gorbachev's dream and Reagan's dream coincided in one point, the possibility of going back to the past, to the pre-nuclear age, to the feeling of safety and security. Our proposal is the total elimination of nuclear weapons. And we see the first step as a 50% reduction in strategic arms and the total elimination of medium-range missiles in Europe. This was agreed by both the Americans and the Soviets. The sticking-point was the Strategic Defence Initiative, SDI. People have asked us why we are against this programme, that perhaps it is better to settle for those reductions anyway, especially as we don't believe SDI will be so effective.

There are three reasons, in my opinion, why this is unacceptable. The first is that nobody knows whether the SDI programme will prove in the future, in 10 or 20 years time, to be defensive or offensive. The second problem is that SDI is only the tip of the iceberg. Because it means a new stage in the arms race in all fields, since the new technology involved will give fantastic possibilities for this. The third and main point is will we go down the road of SDI, with all that is involved, or can we stop the arms race and move towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons?

As far as East-West relations are concerned, we must change. As someone educated in law, I very much appreciate the British legal principle that presumes innocence until proved guilty. Both sides must change their view that we are enemies. We must use the presumption of innocence: that the other side doesn't want to blow you up with nuclear weapons, that neither side is crazy, that nobody wants to disappear from this planet. If we believe that, then we can go back to the time when there was real safety and real security in the world.

Now I believe in new thinking: it is a real fact in the Soviet Union, not only in relation to foreign policy but with regard to domestic policy, about structural reform in our country. I have dreamt about this for 30 years. Therefore why can't I believe in new thinking in the United States too? Why not? I believe that both sides, East and West, the United States and the Soviet Union, have, from an objective point of view, the same interest, to stop the arms race. To stop, to say enough is enough. Therefore I believe in new thinking, not only in my country but in Western countries too. And Rekyjavik is the platform for a new step in dialogue and negotiations.

Now I must say I was concerned about the reaction of public opinion in the United States and in Western Europe to Reykjavik, even shocked. For when Reagan came back to Washington after the summit, he was attacked not only from conservative people but from liberal figures too. I remember the article by Kissinger, who as you know took part in détente in the 70s, in which he criticised Reagan, especially because Reagan agreed with the elimination of all nuclear weapons. And the same voice we hear from West European countries. Not from all commentators and not from all political leaders, but unfortunately from many of them. Now I understand that many people are nervous, even afraid, because for 30 years or more, nuclear deterrence has helped us to prevent a nuclear war. And now maybe we'll agree, I don't know. Maybe yes, maybe no – it depends not only on us, but also on the American side. Maybe we will agree about the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

Now one fear concerns conventional weapons in Western Europe. Gorbachev emphasised that we are also prepared to discuss the problem of conventional weapons, to make a big reduction in these weapons. But this notwithstanding, the risk of a nuclear war is so great that the dangers involved in peace without nuclear weapons is nothing compared with this risk. The second point of course concerns Soviet and American rockets in Europe. It seems very strange to us that many West European political leaders and commentators were against this proposal, very strange indeed, because it was Reagan's proposal, his zero option proposal. I remember on previous visits to West European countries many people telling me about the threat posed by the SS20s. Now nobody seems afraid of them. What happened? We want to destroy the SS20s if the Americans will destroy Pershing 2 and the cruise missiles. So I am a little bit shocked about this reaction, especially since the West European countries could obviously exercise some positive influence in the arms race control process. ●

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Fedor and I have, in the past, been on opposite sides of the barricades. He has been an advisor on Soviet foreign policy at least since the time of Khrushchev; I have been involved in the British side since at least the end of the Second World War. But, reflecting on the lessons of our own experience and in the light of what we are learning about the choice of futures, we both feel the need very much to change our basic approach to world affairs.

Since this meeting is organised by *Marxism Today*, I would like to start with one of the latest contributions to marxist theory expressed in the jargon of dialectical materialism. It goes like this: 'The prevailing dialectic of present day development consists in a combination of competition and confrontation between the two world systems, and a growing tendency towards the interdependence of the countries of the world community. This is precisely the way, through the struggle of opposites, through arduous effort and groping in the dark to some extent, that the controversial but interdependent and in many ways integral world is taking shape.'

Those are the words of Mikhail Gorbachev speaking to the last congress of the Soviet Communist Party. And to anybody with some knowledge of Soviet history it is an almost cataclysmic statement. Because it rejects the philosophy of the two camps which has guided Soviet policy since the time of Lenin and played a major role in post-war Soviet policy, in favour of trying to build security on co-operation between two opposing social systems. And I agree very much with Fedor Burlatsky that the Reykjavik meeting did represent the first real breakthrough since the war in this direction.

You have to start with the arms race if only because it is the dynamics of the arms race which presents the major threat to life on this planet. Chernobyl sent a shock of horror throughout the world, but there are now 50,000 nuclear weapons under Soviet and American control, representing a million Hiroshimas. And we know that if there is another world war with such weapons, no social system will survive. The problem of stopping an arms race which threatens to destabilise relations between the two systems has become the central problem.

Now, in my opinion, since the Reykjavik summit, nothing will ever be the same again. Because its outcome fundamentally changes relations between America and Europe no less than relations between Russia and the West. Although Reagan and Gorbachev failed to reach final agreement they did set an agenda for the future from which neither can now retreat.

The removal of all medium-range nuclear missiles from Europe is now agreed in principle, although in practice it was blocked because Russia went back on its earlier agreement not to include shorter-range missiles too, and to separate this issue of medium-range missiles from the other issues like Star Wars and strategic missiles.

Secondly, a 50% cut in all strategic forces – not just missiles but also bombers – was also agreed in principle although in practice, as Fedor says, it was blocked by America's refusal to stick to the ABM Treaty in pursuing its illusion of Star Wars. And thirdly, President Reagan's proposal to abolish all strategic ballistic missiles would wipe out Britain's Polaris and Trident forces, no less than American, Soviet, Chinese and French missiles.

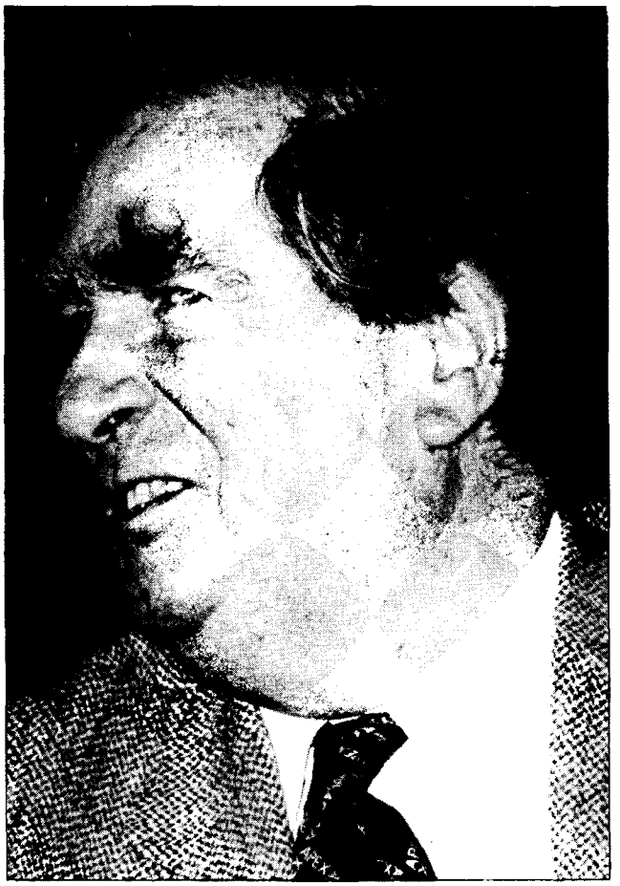
Now this represents a stupendously important shift in the position of both sides and, as I say, an agenda for trying to reach agreement in future. And the rest of the world must now insist that the road-blocks to agreement are removed on both sides.

But, simply to cut existing nuclear forces, which was all that was discussed at Reykjavik, will not stop the nuclear arms race. I remember Gorbachev, in one of his earlier speeches, saying that the real threat to the survival of humanity is not so much the weapons that now exist, as the attempt by both sides to modernise those weapons and to produce ever new types. That is why I believe there must also be a ban on the testing of new nuclear weapons and the testing of their delivery systems. What are now national technical means – spies in the sky, electronic intelligence, seismological devices, and so on – are perfectly capable of monitoring and verifying an agreement to ban all nuclear tests and to stop the development of new delivery systems. That is why a nuclear freeze is so important and in my view is technically within our reach.

Now all countries in the world – and Fedor Burlatsky has made this point in many articles I have read – suffer from a crippling economic burden in arms spending; a burden which seems to be growing year by year. And the only way to produce big savings in the crippling defence budgets on both sides is to make big cuts in conventional forces too: because anyone who has been a defence minister knows that the biggest single component in defence costs is the cost of training and maintaining the manpower which is needed.

Unfortunately, nuclear weapons are not very expensive compared with conventional forces. And unless we can cut conventional forces too, the arms race will simply be diverted into new areas equally dangerous to peace.

So the conclusion I draw from Reykjavik is that it has to some extent broken the postwar log jam in relations between the superpowers. The agenda it has set, if it were turned into concrete and practical agreements, would completely change the psychological perception of each other both in Moscow and in Washington. But if we want to make progress in curbing the arms race, we must complement this agenda with a freeze on the testing of new weapons, a ban on modernisation and an agreement on conventional forces too.



Healey: 'In my opinion, since the Reykjavik summit, nothing will ever be the same again.'

One of the points Fedor could have elaborated on is that the Star Wars programme, involving as it does research in something like 120 new applications of physical principles to warfare, could well produce new non-nuclear weapons, the use of which could be quite as horrific in their consequences as the use of nuclear weapons. A laser which is powerful enough to burn a hole in a rocket during the boost phase could also be used to incinerate a city or for many other purposes which could in their total consequences be as damaging as an all-out nuclear war.

I am encouraged by what has happened at Reykjavik: I think it has provided us all with an opportunity. We must all build on that opportunity and we must be alert, above all, for the rats getting at the agreements reached in Reykjavik – there have been some signs of that already in Washington – and make certain that the European members of the Western Alliance do not at this stage of the game start raising totally irrelevant national preoccupations which detract from the possibility of reaching agreements which I believe are politically within our reach. ●

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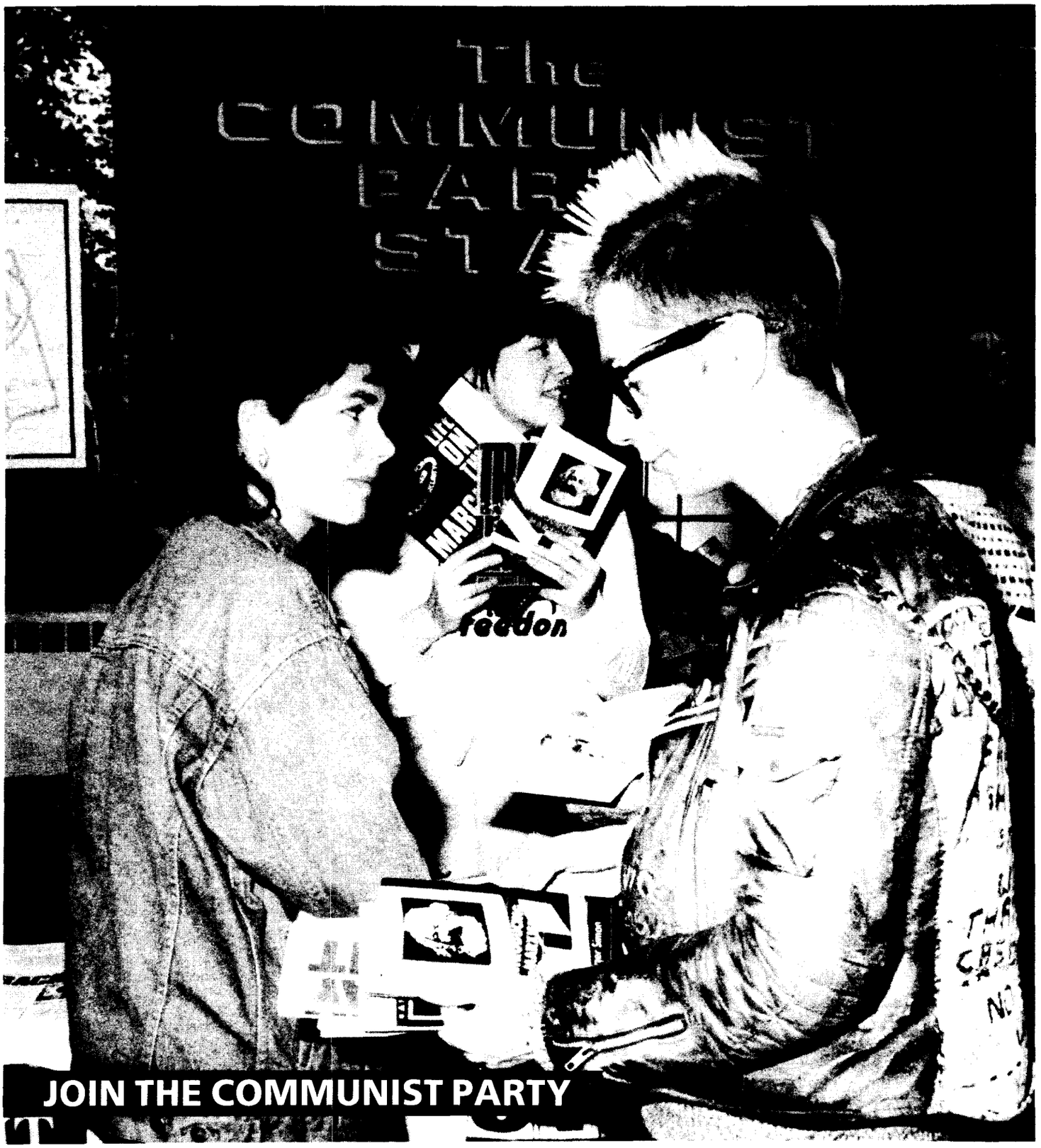

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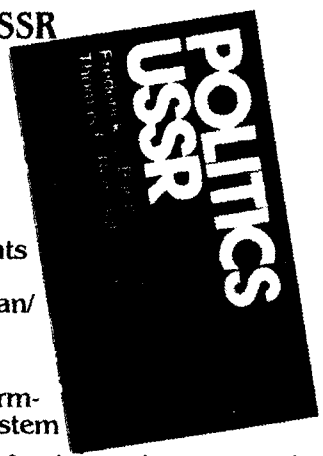

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Sisters under The Skin

Chestnuts roasting on an open fire excepted, there seems nothing more Christmassy and cosy and safe than a panto. That's why well-heeled parents still blithely drag their whining infants away from the Boxing Day sex and violence of the box to the succour of the stage, for the kids' first glorious experience of live theatre.

This inevitably revolves around a tender and affecting love affair between two women (one of them in tunic, fishnet tights and stilettoes) and the ghastly physical humiliations of an old lady who, when she's not falling off her bicycle or losing her drawers, is being frightened to death by spooks in a haunted bedroom. The pantomime dame is grotesque, bawdy and vulgar; she is the very essence of pantomime itself.

Originally a word meaning 'a story told by dance alone', pantomime has gone through many changes to arrive where it is today. But even in the 1880s – when Augustus Harris first began staging what we'd nowadays recognise as the modern panto, at the Theatre Royal in London's Drury Lane – the genre was considered extremely vulgar and 'low'. For panto is a mongrel, ragbag corruption of countless theatrical forms which critics have traced from the ancient Roman feast of Saturnalia (when male and female participants ritually exchanged clothing) via the low farce of the Commedia dell' Arte, Shakespeare's comedies, mime, burlesque, ballet, fairy-tale romance and, perhaps most important, music hall.

It was from music hall that the original dames all came, bringing their speciality acts – their knockabout routines and singalong songsheets – with them. The dame (Oxford English Dictionary definitions include 'An aged housewife, mistress of a childrens' school. Matron. Mistress of a house') is a hardy English perennial stereotype who can be traced back to the Wife of Bath and beyond. A stock character introduced as comic diversion, she is the mother-in-law joke made manifest.

It is said that the late 19th century music hall great Dan Leno – of whom, unfortunately, little visual record survives – made moving character studies of his dames, raising his Mother Goose and Queen of Hearts into great heights of artistry. But if this was so he was, and indeed still is, the exception to the rule.

For the last 100 years British comedians (all of whom appear to have a drag character in their repertoire even now) and actors have relied on bawdy knockout farce for their applause, from the Cook's famous slapstick baking scene in Dick Whittington to Widow Twankey's lengthy, gross strip-tease that culminates in the final removal of a washing-line full of voluminous bloomers. Dames wear chandeliers in their hair, get covered in bucketsfull of water and – most of all – keep getting knocked over. No wonder feminists never know whether to laugh or cry?

Over the years panto has gained a more genteel reputation, becoming finally 'respectable' when the Royal Family started sending their kiddies to it. And yet there will always thankfully be something iffy about this Xmas travesty while the men who play dames continue ever-so-carefully to distinguish themselves from female impersonators, and insist on describing themselves as character actors.

Even Danny La Rue, who was at one time Britain's highest-paid entertainer, and has made his reputation out of his 'glamour' drag, takes every available opportunity to distance himself from his 'lesser' travesty sisters. ('I find the expression "female impersonator" suspect. I am a comedian who uses female characters, but I never let my audience forget I am a man.')

In some senses La Rue is quite literally nothing like a dame: he does panto as an Ugly Sister yet plays her glam and never lowers himself to the knockabout routine. Yet in essence there is a little difference between him and Old Mother Riley on the one hand, or the drag queen down the local pub who is still bringing cucumbers out of her handbag on the other. They are all sisters under the skin, and there is little chance of the dame figure becoming an endangered species when it's arguable that men would use any old excuse to wear a frock. And until this system of male domination which we call sexism evolves into something less inbalanced, men will continue to find relief in donning skirts, and audiences will go on being entranced by their caricature of androgyny, however twisted and grotesque.●

Kris Kirk

Photo: BBC Hulton Picture Library

Dykes and dames: up to their necks gender bending

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Reclaiming Our Foremothers

Photographic images assail us endlessly as we walk past hoardings, read newspapers, turn on the telly, open the family snapshot album. Photographs are ubiquitous and the camera all-pervasive. Photography, therefore, has become an area of concern to feminists. Recent feminist critiques of photography have focused upon women as the object of photography rather than upon the work of women as image-makers. Thus Page 3 style photos which endlessly represent women as sex objects have been challenged and the stereotyping of women in advertising has regularly featured on the feminist agenda.

But what happens when women move behind the camera? Women photographers are not uncommon. Indeed, Victorian pioneers included portraitists such as Julia Margaret Cameron, and Victorian travellers such as Isabella Bird Bishop kept photographic records.

Women work in all areas of photography. Some women have produced startling work within genres that have been particularly dominated by men. For example, Gerda Tarot worked with Robert Capa in Spain during the Civil War, and was killed; Susan Meiselas' photo-reportage from Nicaragua offers an extraordinary account of a more contemporary struggle.

But many women have chosen to focus on more local subject-matter: street life, women at work, men, women and children at home; or, indeed, on landscapes or still-life.

So is there a women's perspective in photography? Are there ways in which women photographers create work which stands in opposition to dominant (male) practices? Do women photographers have the advantage, as women, of being perceived as less threatening than men and thus catch their subjects more relaxed thereby achieving a quality of unposed true-to-life reportage?

A new exhibition, *Women Photographers 1900-1955*, offers us the opportunity to look at a range of work by women. Various types of photography are included: documentary work and photo-journalism as well as, for instance, early 20th-century pictorialist photographs and 1930s upper-class studio portraiture. The exhibition is the first one of its kind, and will tour the country next year. It was organised by Val Williams and includes the work of nearly 40 women.

A number of the photographers were featured in the recent Channel Four series, *Five Women Photographers*. Val Williams has also written a book, *Women Photographers – the other observers to the present*, which is the first major history of British women photographers.

I was thrilled at discovering in the exhibition some photographers previously unknown to me. The exhibition shows a range of work: for example, experimental photographs of the 1920s and 1930s, including Helen Muspratt's adoption of the surrealist light-exposure technique of solarisation for portrait work and Madame Yevonde's colour experimentation. These stand in sharp contrast to the London working class documentary work of Edith Tudor Hart and Margaret Monck; or to 'on the streets' photo-stories published in *Picture Post*.

The *Picture Post* work is shown as news-sheet stories and the exhibition includes a showcase of books giving some indication of where and how some of the photographic work was published (although not pursuing the question of who then read it). Situations and intentions also differed: West End portrait studios were commercial ventures with a fashionable upper-class clientele; first world war 'behind the lines' photographs were shot by nurses working in France; by contrast, Vanessa Bell's family photographs were essentially a *private* record of 'family' (Bloomsbury Group) events. These snapshot equivalents are included to make a point about the way in which photography is used to create an idealised family history through recording only 'good' or 'special' moments.

But the exhibition is in some ways unsatisfactory. The diversity of style and subject-matter means that, as an exhibition, there is a lack of coherence. It is also frustrating in merely offering a few photographs to represent the life's work of each photographer. Indeed, the only reason for hanging this range of work together is that all the images were made by women.

It is only really through reference to the book that the

Bell by Bell: Vanessa snaps Quentin in pensive mood, 1929

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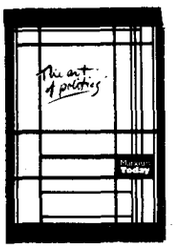

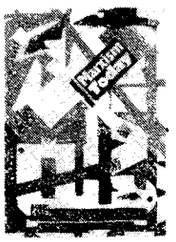

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Xmas/M

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rationale behind the exhibition selection becomes clearer. Val Williams suggests in the book that there *is* a 'women's tradition' in photography. Rather than attempting to list and consider the work of all women working in the medium this century, she focuses on photography which she views as 'of significance in the re-creation of a women's photographic history'. However, she never actually defines 'the women's tradition' nor explicitly argues for a particular view of women's photography. In effect, what she has done is to take a range of practices by present-day feminist photographers and look back into history to find predecessors.

The problem with taking contemporary *feminist* photographers as a key reference point is that a number of women working in less obviously political ways in terms of subject-matter, aesthetic form, or publication objectives are ignored. Surely any attempt to determine whether there is a women's perspective in photography must take its starting point from the broad spectrum of work produced by women.

Furthermore, in attempting to determine whether there is a women's tradition, it may be more useful to start not from subject-matter, but from approaches and objectives. Do women perceive their task as photographers *differently* to men? And *if* so, is this a consequence of differing work situations and constraints (for example, as mothers with childcare responsibilities)? Do women behind the camera construct a specific kind of relationship with their subject? What makes women want to take photographs? ●

Liz Wells

Women Photographers 1900-1955 will be at: National Museum of Photography Film and Television (until 4 Jan 1987). Photographers' Gallery, London (Feb 13-Mar 21); Watershed, Bristol (May 2-June 13); Stills Gallery, Edinburgh (June/July 1987); The Photogallery, Cardiff (Oct 1-31).

Christmas lift-off

I cannot speak for the other three 'foreigners' I shared a flat with during the winter of 1979. It was Christmas. For each of us it was going to be our first in England. Whatever the expectations and anxieties we had of the season, we did not confide them to each other. Well, perhaps my other flatmates did not have any anxieties and expectations. Perhaps that is why it never came up.

At any rate, I was used to Christmas in Ghana. The affair in Accra was pretty straightforward. Gem biscuits, lemonade and cakes. Plenty of it (at least, before inflation hit 900%). Everybody gave gem biscuits, lemonade and cakes away. Manufacturers gave them to their workers for Christmas, professional men and women gave them to the domestic staff they employed, even the poor workers gave each other gem biscuits, lemonade and cakes.

Christmas really took off if the harmattan winds arrived early. The dry winds, blowing from the Sahara, would bring with it fine dust particles which left a haze in the air and a thin film on everything it settled on. The harmattan created a surreal atmosphere. It combined with the near frenzy created by the exchange in gem biscuits.

In years like that, the annual market women's Christmas picnic march, complete with brass band, would become especially animated – no small spectacle by any standard.

The Christmas of 1979 was different. For a start, there wasn't a mega-display of gem biscuits in the shops, nor was the harmattan expected to swing in from the North Pole. On the contrary, the shops were bursting with a vast array of commodities. The displays in them dazzled. Harrods proudly announced the volume of trade it was doing. A countdown of the number of shopping days before Christmas began in the papers. With it came an air of heightened expectation, sharpened by the slight nip in the wind. The day for lift-off had been set.

In the streets people seemed to have more purpose about them, and they walked faster, uninhibited by bursting carrier bags. The voice in the TV commercials became frantic and more demanding, and seemed to panic as the countdown progressed. Suddenly all my expectations of Christmas began to recede. A sense of feeling tetchy, and restless prevailed. Anomie began to set in rapidly.

A Christmas card came through the door one morning. The picture on the card depicted Christmas Day in a meadow covered in snow. Whole families were out with their friends and pets, having fun. In the background, sitting on a hillside, were rows of cottages sunken in snow. At Christmas, no scene in West Africa quite resembled this one. Unless, of course, one imagined the landscape buried under sheets and sheets of harmattan dust.

The efforts of the market economy, as it tried to increase its margin of profit at Christmas, had been distracting. And the effect of the Christmas card was dramatic. Its arrival marked the beginning of an inexplicable sense of expectation. When the weatherman on the box predicted snow, the significance of the card dawned. In retrospect the diversion created by the market proved to be more profound than I had first thought. All around an ancient drama was unfolding. An outstanding personality of the year was chosen to perform one of the most important rituals of Christmas. Amidst great fanfare and publicity the celebrity switched the lights on in Regent Street to drive away the dark of long winter nights.

Unless one is fortunate enough to be initiated by a Christmas card or some such thing, no experience of harmattan dust could ever provide an understanding of the rituals the British performed at Christmas. When the nine o'clock news announced the odds Mecca bookmakers had quoted for a white Christmas, this conviction hardened. The specially fattened Christmas turkey, the deference, and at the same time joy, and excitement that snow at Christmas evoked now made sense. The inexplicable sense of expectation was no longer a mystery.

Overwhelmed by these revelations, hitting the sack early was calculated to avoid the stress of lift-off. After all, what was lift-off, compared to touchdown amidst scenes of joy, and the idyllic beauty that my Christmas card promised?

When I hit the streets the next day, it was quiet, deathly quiet – not a soul stirred, not even the number six to Hyde Park. Dragging my feet through the dirt and remnants of dried leaves on the pavement, it occurred to me that the papers only guaranteed lift-off, they never mentioned touchdown. ●

Mije Barnor

Photo: Sally and Richard Greenhill

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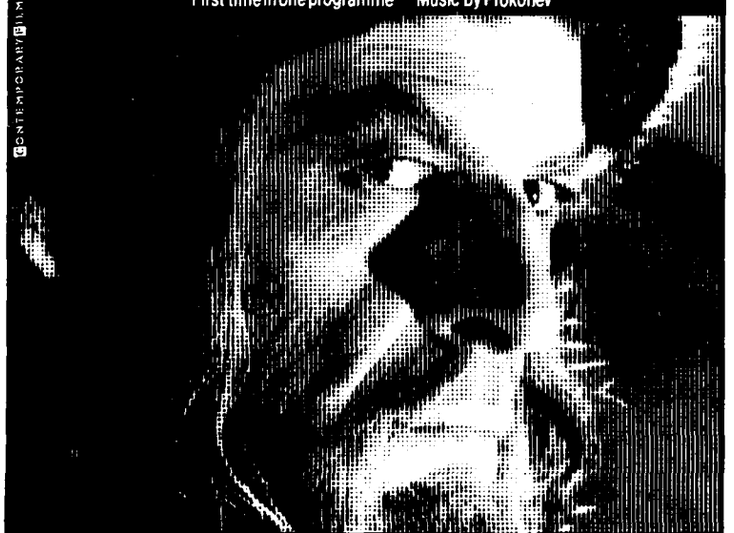

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Empty Visions?

'I want my MTV' eventually became the opening line of a hit song (Dire Straits' *Money For Nothing*), but the slogan was first heard five years ago, in advertisements for MTV:Music Television, the world's first all-music cable TV channel, based in the USA.

Rock stars like Mick Jagger and Pete Townshend leered into camera and implored American kids to demand the new service from their local cable station: 'Call your cable operator now, and say, 'I want my Emm tee vee!' As the service celebrates its fifth birthday this year, it is now as much a part of the US pop establishment as Jagger and Townshend.

MTV has already had an impact beyond its size. The station is available to nearly 30m Americans, although recently less than 1% have been tuning in. However, MTV's real impact is the 'gatekeeping' role it plays in the US pop market.

In its early years the service was credited with breaking British 'new wave' music that had hitherto been considered too radical for American radio. Bear in mind that this crusade was headed by the likes of the Thompson Twins and Howard Jones but, still, MTV's playlist in those days *was* more innovative than radio. The appeal of the British bands came from the striking visual impact of their videos, whose popularity with MTV exerted an unseen influence on British pop, as it boosted the fortunes of some acts – and not others – in a key international 'territory'.

But the innovation that established MTV has waned. Nowadays its playlists are indistinguishable from its radio counterparts. MTV's lifeline to young middle-America sustains old wave British rock from the likes of Yes, ELP, and Genesis; while 'alternative' music is pushed out from the prime-time slots into late Sunday and Monday night shows.

One positive shift, though, has been the increase in black music on the station. MTV was accused of racism in its first years of life. Black acts were almost entirely absent, while white acts playing soul or funk *were* aired – provided their rendition was sufficiently lame. These days more black faces can be seen: rock-orientated dance music from Prince, Michael Jackson and Tina Turner has found a firm place, alongside the m-o-r sounds of Lionel Richie and Whitney Houston.

But MTV's real saviour has been Run DMC – wholesome black lads who sugar their raps with heavy metal guitar, and denounce drugs, crime and all things immoral. Their duet with white rockers Aerosmith (*Walk This Way*) created the perfect MTV cross-over and received heavy airplay all summer long.

This 'play safe' strategy has taken much of the early buzz out of the format. And the impact on record companies in Britain and elsewhere can only be negative, because they must sign and market acts with one eye on the crucial American market.

MTV's originality lies in its significance for television, not music. Perhaps it heralds a new attitude to TV consumption, or perhaps it consolidates existing patterns; either way, the episodic structure of MTV is best experienced casually, paying attention sometimes to sound or vision only and dipping in from time to time for more concentrated viewing. You don't sit down and watch MTV, you *absorb* it; videos, ads and zappy graphics flash across the screen in an unremitting flow, 24 hours a day, almost unbroken by the discrete 'programmes' we expect from broadcast TV.

The 'VJs' (Video Jocks) who used to pop up between each clip are now seen less frequently, giving the channel an even greater sense of having no authority or anchor. But this approach lends itself to extremely uncritical coverage of pop. You won't catch the VJs displaying the kind of cynicism that leaks out of *The Tube*, *Whistle Test* or from John Peel's occasional and incongruous *Top Of The Pops* appearances. The VJs love just everything.

This abdication of criticism is not nearly as common on American TV as many people think but it does represent a cross-media trend towards the fusion of advertising and product. MTV is at the centre of developments like *Miami Vice* (working title: *MTV Cops*), Sigue Sigue Sputnik, and the growing corporate sponsorship of pop, where the relations between product and promotion are increasingly indistinct. Everything on MTV is a promotion – from the station ID, through the advertisements, to the videos themselves, which advertise other products.

What are we to make of the politics of MTV? Left verdicts have veered from the outrageously optimistic assertion that music video pioneers a radical subversion of realist broadcasting ... to the usual condemnations of lyrics and image. But it is no use bemoaning the ascendancy of the image on MTV, since visual style has always been at the very heart of pop. And left efforts to 'analyse' pop narrative are often no more convincing.

In the US this summer progressives and feminists debated the meaning of Madonna's hit *Papa Don't Preach*, and its video (featured heavily on MTV). Its critics say the song and the video preach an anti-abortion line, telling young girls to 'keep their babies'. But facile content analysis like this is no more helpful than the overblown formalism of the post-modernists, who embrace the anti-realist impulse in music video, while neglecting its uncritical core.

Some critics see hope in the imminent demise of MTV and pop video. But MTV has been expanding. Last year the media corporation Viacom International bought the channel from its original owners Warner-Amex (as part of a $570m package) and quickly established a second service (VH-1) for older viewers, featuring more black artists (strictly m-o-r) and oldies like Neil Diamond and the Moody Blues. This is a shrewd move, catering as it does for the increasingly important older audience for pop, who no longer go out to gigs, but still seek the excitement of pop performance.

Ironically, the new boundary-breaking service has found a surprise success story in reruns of the Monkees TV series. The Monkees have just completed a lucrative reunion tour of the US, and CBS are about to shoot a remake of the series, using new actors. How can a 60s bubblegum group who were considered hopelessly uncool at the time become the cult heroes of the 1980s? The answer lies partly with pop video and MTV. Many of today's stars have achieved fame precisely because of their miming and 'acting' talents, and failure to play on your own records is no longer considered a breach of trust (Frankie Goes To Hollywood *boast* about it).

MTV video jocks

MTV has helped to change the way we think about pop and performance. And its influence extends way beyond the cabled living rooms of the USA. MTV has also spawned European imitators, some of them very pale indeed, like the Virgin Records/Yorkshire Television venture *Music Box*. My hunch is that MTV is here to stay, and may eventually find its way onto the deregulated airwaves of the UK. We might sneer that empty visions make the most sound; but they also attract the most advertisers, too. ●

Andrew Goodwin

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CHANNEL 5 CHOICE

Sauce for the goose and stuffing for the gander

Homage to Turkey

Most people think that Christmas has lost it's religious meaning. Most people are wrong. Christmas is still about religion but the object of worship has changed. On December 25 millions of people will pay reverent homage to . . . the Turkey. Christmas just wouldn't be Christmas without the ritual that surrounds the buying, preparing and eating (especially the eating) of the Big Bird.

But as with most religions there are non-believers, converts to another way. In this case they're called vegetarians and from being a persecuted minority they are steadily growing in number and influence. My local butcher, to whom I am a stranger, reckons his turkey sales have been falling off in recent years (a bit like church attendance) and it's estimated that there are over a million non-flesh eaters in Britain today.

Why not join them this Christmas? Apart from the moral, economic and health reasons for not eating meat, do you really want to sit around on Christmas Day with a stomach full of flesh while the wrecked carcass sits accusingly in a pool of congealing grease?

But what about the rest of the Christmas ritual – all those other things we put inside ourselves during the season of goodwill? Every year newspapers and magazines are stuffed full of advice on eating and drinking at Christmas. Thousands of column inches either urge us to excess or tell us how to deal with its unpleasant results. Do we need this advice? Do we need to be told that a mixture of Guinness and Advocaat will induce nausea? About as much as we need three helpings of Christmas pudding – but that never stopped anyone.

Now the curious thing about all this advice is that *everyone* reads it and *everyone* ignores it – as demonstrated by the large numbers of people rolling around full of Guinness and Advocaat on Christmas Eve. In spite of knowing this I'm going to offer my own advice. Read on and put an end to Xmas misery.

Make a list of typical Christmas fare. Go through the list and delete everything you haven't consumed since last Christmas. Say goodbye to; roast turkey, chipolata sausages, mince pies, Advocaat, British sherry, selection boxes, dates and Christmas pudding. You can eat whatever is left on the list. Plus, if you really can't resist it, one small Advocaat. Merry Christmas.●

Brian Hill

Yuletide Groove

Since the advent of recorded music the yuletide groove has proved an indispensable item in the grand repository of Christmas ritual. Such rites as the family viewing of the bumper, super-tinselled *Top of The Pops* and the sound of Bing Crosby groaning for his supper on *White Christmas* (for many years the best selling record of all time), have all added pungency to the traditional sticky cocktail of Dickensian sentiment, modern consumermania, and timeless excess.

Predictability is at the heart of the season, nowhere more so than in record racks offering Harry Secombe's *Golden Hour Of Christmas Favourites*, Chas And Dave's *Cockney Christmas Knees Up* or this year's choir boy wonder warbling carols. Then there will be the re-re-re-release of Ono/Lennon's *Happy Christmas War Is Over* and the strident adenoidal twang of Slade's Noddy Holder assuring you once more that 'Here it is . . .'

Penning an addition to the Christmas canon is an ambition nursed in the unlikeliest hearts – witness Wham's *Another Christmas*, or even Chuck Berrys *Run Run Rudolph* – though the prospect of cash registers ringing in the snow remains a powerful artistic incentive.

The accepted classic remains *Phil Spector's Christmas Record*; the likes of *I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus* and *Frosty The Snowman* were never to sound the same after being fed into the Spector Wall Of Sound. The result has the Ronettes and The Crystals baying into the night while a thousand sleigh bells are jangled in the Grand Canyon.

In comparison most other Christmas concepts are patchy, unsatisfying affairs, though the Motown Christmas LP *from 1964 can't help but* provide some splendid moments – too bad the Jackson Five's *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town* from 10 years later isn't likewise available.

The Beach Boys surfing *Little Saint Nick* provides the only standout on their 1964 seasonal offering, and Frank Sinatra singing *Oh Little Town Of Bethlehem* is a little like Norman Fowler wishing those on the dole a happy Christmas; scarcely credible. Frank is better sipping a Martini on *Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas*.

Personally I'll settle for the oddball cool yule of Babs Gonzalez *Be Bop Santa* from 1955 with its lines about a santa dressed in red cashmere dispensing Dizzy Gillespie records and books on jive. For the other side of the Christmas story - those in the manger, not in the inn - Victoria Spivey's *Christmas Morning Blues* from 1926 remains the saddest story you'll hear on record, and also the best sung.

They really don't make 'em like that anymore.●

Neil Spencer

Round Midnight

Moody blues at midnight

Set in the smoky jazz clubs and seedy hotel rooms of fifties Paris, Bertrand Tavernier's fictionalised bio-pic of ageing jazz saxophonist Dale Turner (Dexter Gordon) centres on the drink-ravaged musician's friendship with obsessive fan Francis (Francois Cluzet).

Befriended, supported and encouraged by Francis, Dale lays off the booze, plays some gigs at the now legendary Blue Note club, and starts composing and recording again. Tavernier's free-flowing narrative, and the blue-grey tones of Bruno de Keyzer's photography evoke the sweaty intensity of the live gigs, and testify to the eloquence of the largely non-verbal communication between Dale and Francis – theirs is a friendship forged out of a mutual love for jazz music.

But you don't really need to know anything about jazz to appreciate the film: you just need eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to feel. Because *Round Midnight* hits just the right note every time.●

Nigel Floyd

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Beware the Bulls

The Boxing Day walk is a firmly-rooted tradition in our household – a cure for the gluttony of the day before and a preparation for the excesses still to come. Like the weather (hail, rain, snow or sun) the route varies, but is usually in Wharfedale, in the Yorkshire Dales national park near Grassington.

The walk starts at Burnsall and in the first half-mile we cross 11 stiles, mostly gap-stiles in ancient stone walls marking the boundaries of one-time strip-farming. We've hardly crossed the first couple of stiles when someone has the binoculars out and is making wild assertions about the species on view. Last time it was a grey wagtail.

A bit further on we pull up a hill with wonderful long views of Upper Wharfedale opening up, and a small copse on the right – this time it's blue tits. A bit further on it's field-fares with Great Whernside and Buckden Pike in the distant background.

Miles and miles of stiles

Just before we drop down into the beautiful village of Linton (village green complete with, of all things, an astrolabe; and a pub with smashing grub) we avert our eyes from the view of Wharfedale's greatest eyesore, the lunar-looking quarries near Kilnsey.

A couple of pints later we are off to reach the river at the footbridge by Linton Falls. This area is inhabited by the greediest and most quarrelsome ducks in Yorkshire. Throw them a crust and they will entertain you for a good 10 minutes.

From this point on the walk follows a beautiful, peaceful stretch of riverside. Whenever I set foot on it my pleasure is mixed with a deep resentment that there are still too many stretches of this beautiful river where landowning and farming interests prevent public access.

Near Hebden the path crosses the river on a swaying pedestrian suspension bridge and returns to Burnsall via the spectacular viewpoint of Loup Scar, where the river drives a curving course through high limestone cliffs.

Back at Burnsall we have covered a total of nearly eight miles including 29 stiles which must be something like a record for the distance. The birds I've never counted! Bulls, happily, we've never met on this particular walk, though recent government legislation does allow some bulls into fields crossed by public rights of way.

The day over, we are refreshed in body and mind, ready to tuck into the cold turkey and finish off the Xmas pud.●

Dave Priscott

Christmas Bazaars

As a child growing up in a Lincolnshire village in the 1950s, a crucial ritual in the anticipation of Christmas was the Christmas bazaar: weeks of painful making of intricate and useless sewn objects; queuing up on the day in the cold outside the hall; doors opening in a rush to reach the best stalls first.

It marked the final moment in a lengthy social process, entirely conducted by women, which centred on the production and exchange of food, clothing and domestic items within the community.

The bazaar also has a place in socialist traditions. For women especially, bazaars offer a means both of displaying skills and of getting a bargain outside the network of capitalist consumer relations.

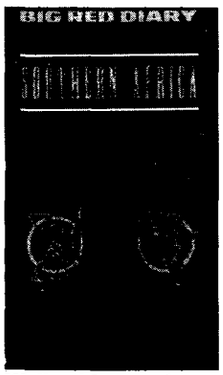
Sentimentalised and outworn sign of women's domestic virtue or part of popular celebration and ritual? The Christmas bazaar for me evokes, in however distorted a form, a glimpse of a set of relationships of which I am no longer a part, but which I want to value as one possible image of a women's socialist culture.●

Rosemary Betterton

1987 Diaries

When I was young, part of the ritual of Christmas was always buying my grandmother her *Boots Scribbling Diary*, so that she could record the weather, the market price of calves and who married who.

These days its more complicated. There are diaries for anglers, footballers, cooks, vicars and even one dedicated to those living in London. How do you choose?



Well red facts and stats

This year's *Tate Gallery Desk Diary* features paintings from its contemporary art collection. It's beautifully put together, almost too good to spoil by writing in.

If you want something to make you smile at work, there's the *Private Eye Desk Diary* with its cartoon a week plus assorted newspaper misprints.

Then there are the *Oxfam* and *Date Aid Desk Diaries*, full of pictures, facts and stats.

Pocket diaries for young people seem to have changed if the *Grange Hill* Diary is anything to go by. No more longest river, highest mountain, capital cities. Instead it's how to say no to drugs.

Finally we come to the 'radical' diaries. *Spare Rib* covers women in movies and has the invaluable menstrual calendar; the *British Women Artists* Diary is beautiful though the shiny paper means smudged entries.

The *1987 Big Red Diary* is *'Southern Africa – Vistory is Certain'* and it's the best of the bunch. Well designed, loads of space for notes and addresses and lots of impressive illustrations and quotes.

With all these to choose from, don't you feel boring owning a Filofax or even a *Marxism Today* Lefax.●

Sioned Mair Richards

Behind You!

Try some exercise over Christmas, even if it's only as much as turning off the TV and treat the children to the real magic of the theatre.

The Pied Piper The National Theatre. Legendary tale with magic and music performed by London schoolchildren. Details: 01 928 2252.

The Fantastic Voyage of Uly Sinbad The Unicorn Theatre, London. Until Jan 14. Modern mixture of *The Odyssey* and *Arabian Nights*. Suitable for seven years upwards. Details 01-379 3280.

Red Riding Hood Dukes Playhouse, Lancaster. Update of folk tale with moth-eaten wolf-about-town in traditional panto style. Details: 0524 66645.

The Boy Who Grew Too Fast Sadlers Wells, London, Dec 11-27. Operas directed and composed by Carlo Menotti especially for young people. Overgrown schoolboy finds miracle cure but with dire consequences. Details: 01 278 8916.

Jack and the Beanstalk The Crucible, Sheffield. Classic pantomime with a villain to boo and a hero to cheer. Details: 0742 79922.

The Crystal Palace and Harliquinade The Norwich Puppet Theatre, Dec 12-Jan 31. Extravaganza of pantomime and operetta under ultra-violet light. Details: 0603 629921.

The Meg and Mog Show The Studio Theatre, Bristol Old Vic. Dec 4-Jan 10. Failed witch is helped by faithful cat. Details: 0272 24388.

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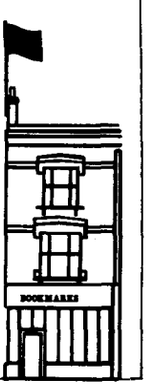

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BOOKS

1986 Christmas Crackers

Photo: John Sturrock/Network

Lucky Strike

1986 was a year of recovery for the labour and trade union movement. After the disastrous TUC of 1985 we started to find a clear purpose and developed some new ways of working.

This recovery can't yet be measured in rising confidence at the workplace, which is unlikely to come before the next general election. But it can be seen in new initiatives like the GMBATU's flare campaign and the TGWU's attempt to make contact with its young members.

With some notable exceptions, including the print workers at Wapping, the members of Silentnight, and the thousands of health workers who continue to fight privatisation, more people seem to have written about strikes this year than have taken part in them.

John Lloyd and *Martin Adeney*'s analytical account of the miners' strike **The Miners' Strike 1984-5** *(Routledge, Keegan & Paul, £14.95)* is a powerful book. It has produced strong criticism from many who were involved in the dispute. Others, some equally involved, see the book as the definitive work on the strike. Lloyd won the Journalist of the Year Award for his coverage. If you can stand it all again it is well worth reading, and shows why Lloyd is held in such high esteem by his contemporaries.

The last word, however, for now at least, should go to the women who made such an outstanding contribution. *Joan Witham's* **Hearts and Minds** *(Canary Press, £4,95)* and *Vicky Seddon*, editor **The Cutting Edge** *(Lawrence and Wishart, £4.95)*, both provide an opportunity to hear the women's story and think about what one of those involved describes as the possiblity of a new kind of socialism arising from the women's experience.

Peter Hain's **Political Strikes** *(Viking, £14,95)* and *Phil Bassett's* **Strike Free** *(MacMillan, £10.95)* are two of the more thoughtful contributions on unions and strikes.

Bassett is one of the sharpest commentators of the union scene but sometimes, as in this book, he tends to overestimate the impact the EETPU type of business unionism will have on the future of the movement.

Hain on the other hand looks for a new unionism which retains the important principles of struggle and solidarity, but which goes beyond strikes, economism and sectional interests to a much broader political approach. He looks, quite rightly in my view, for a kind of organic change which points to the future, but also retains the important democratic principles of our past.

This organic change is part of the recovery process. It is expressed at the present time in a fairly loose, unstructured way by the new leaders on the centre left in the TGWU, Usdaw, GMBATU and Nupe, who between them represent over 3.5m workers, organise some of the key industries for the future, understand and accept the need for more democracy and equal opportunities among their members, and who will make a major contribution to the labour movement in the years ahead.

In some ways their task is to take over where Jack Jones left off when he retired in 1978. In his biography **Union Man** *(Collins £15)*, Jack explains his philosophy of giving power to lay members, extending the role of activists, making the officers more accountable, and the unions more open and democratic.

The new leaders and their members have to complete this work by making sure that women and black members have power in their unions. Then to go beyond the activists to the members, forming a truly representative, democratic partnership and participative trade union movement, where activists and members play a real part and are not relegated to the sidelines as passive observers in a world of business unionism. ●

Tom Sawyer

Critical Canons

Marxism. Socialism. Pluralism. These ideas and the connection between them have dominated my political reading in 1986. *Jon Elster's* comprehensive **Making Sense of Marx** *(Cambridge £10.95)*, belies its easy-going title and sympathetic sound, but it is bound to be a major reference point in theoretical debates for some years. Coming to praise Marx, he almost ends up burying him.

A more robust and orthodox marxist book is *Ellen Meiksins Wood's* **The Retreat from Class** *(Verso £6.95)*. She does not deal with the important tendency of 'analytical marxism' represented by Elster, but she does take to task all manner of other 'revisionists'. The message is that classical marxism is in good shape and that the kind of bourgeois idealism which poses nowadays as pluralistic marxism should be exposed for what it is. In some cases this critique works well: there is after all a core of materialist propositions at the centre of Marx's project which cannot be revised indefinitely without a rechristening of the ideology becoming necessary.

However, I would suggest against Wood that the historical materialist method does not always involve giving class analysis an absolute priority. And her definition of the modern working class, though strict, actually refers to a very broad group of people – those who have little else to sell than their labour power. Yet however militant we make this class analysis sound, it does not deliver all that much for specific strategic and descriptive purposes. But Wood's fundamentalism is strenuous, and despite her annoying 'holier than thou' tone, less canonical marxists should not be tempted into reading it merely polemically.

Once cold war enemies, marxist and pluralist ideas have since moved closer together, especially on the nature of democracy. *Robert Dahl*, the doyen of American pluralist theory, demonstrates in his elegant and succinct **A Preface to Economic Democracy** *(Polity £15.00)*, that pluralism has come a long way since the 1950s. No longer the apologia for the 'free West', pluralism now shares with marxism the concern to understand and remedy the socio-economic obstacles to political self-determination. Dahl doesn't quite say that capitalism is the root of all evil, but he does argue for a radical extension of cooperative democratic organisation in the economy and an end to private control over corporate assets.

Capitalism is not the root of all democratic difficulties anyway. In democratic socialism there will be important questions of representative decision-making, levels of participation, and differences – maybe even conflicts – amongst people's public priorities and aspirations. In other words, problems associated with a pluralist personal political culture. Michael Rustin's useful collection **For A Pluralist Socialism** *(Verso £5.95)*, helps focus the concrete issues and possibilities, ranging from PR and regional autonomy to the right to work. ●

Gregor McLennan

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Gastronomic Pleasures

In writing about my favourite cookery and wine books I have had to face a stark and worrying truth: I'm a conservative. And decidedly 'nouvelle' at that. It is definitely a case of 'professional chefs rule OK' – in particular Mosimann, Roux, Guerard, and Troisgros. Clearly an incomplete hagiography. But together these chefs provide a mass of delightful modern recipes to attract and challenge anyone.

Being of a certain age, having attended a school where boys never learnt cooking, and coming from a culture where preparing food was emphatically 'women's work', cookery books played a critical part in my first fumbling attempts to liberate myself from the wilderness of bad British cooking.

First among these pedagogic giants was **The Constance Spry Cookery Book** *(Pan)*. Comprehensive – it really does tell you how to boil an egg as well as how to jug a hare – and with a chatty yet lucid style it is hard to better.

The Cookery Year *(Reader's Digest)*, is also a must in this 'anchor class'. It can be a great source of inspiration when you get all-a-dither about what the principal ingredient of the main course should be. Month-by-month **The Cookery Year** tells you what is in season. You need never again experience the maddening frustration of getting to the shops only to find that half of your ingredients for that evening's dinner are not available at all or only at a price which suggests that they have been flown into the country on Concorde.

But more pleasurable by far are the greater tomes of the French 'nouvelle' chefs such as *Michel Guérard's* **Cuisine Gourmand** *(Papermac £7.95)*, the *Roux Brothers* **New Classic Cuisine** *(Macdonald £14.50)*, *Mosimann's* **Cuisine Naturele** *(Macdonald £14.50)*, or *Jean and Pierre Troisgros'* **The Nouvelle Cuisine** *(Papermac £5.95)*. Their cooking is healthier and definitely different. Superb ingredients, unusual combinations and the relative simplicity of their approach mark them out. Home-made stocks and home-make vegetable-based liaisons are obvious cases in point. In these days of stock cubes and ready-make everything, this style of cooking does not save time or money. But the results are definitely worth the effort.

In their own restaurants these chefs are shockingly, prohibitively expensive. By publishing they bring some of the most creative of contemporary French cooking within the reach of far more people. One hesitates before describing their literary products in an overly democratic vocabulary, but equally it would be wrong to think it was 'truffles with everything'.

For accompaniment The Roux Brothers' **New Classic Cuisine** *(Macdonald £14.50)*, often helpfully suggests two wines (one cheaper, one dearer) which they consider to be suitable companions for their different fare. After all, why spend effort preparing a wonderful meal only to swill down a plonk that takes the moisture off the roof of your mouth or makes everything taste of tannin? If you want to get into this side of things more seriously an excellent way to start is with Hugh Johnson's **World Atlas of Wine** *Mitchell Beazley £22.50)*, and, if funds allow, the **Wine Companion** *(Mitchell Beazley £15.95)*.

Baring one's soul about one's private pleasures can be a risky business in 'this great movement of ours'. However for those comrades who believe that such sybaritic indulgences can lead only to fecklessness, moral turpitude or to cancelling subscriptions to the *Morning Star*, I conclude by recommending **Portrait of a Chef** by Helen Morris *(Oxford University Press £1.95)*. This provides a fascinating insight into early Victorian society but also illustrates much of the grossness of the classical French cooking against which 'nouvelle cuisine' was later to rebel. The book also describes the life of a gifted chef who not only had a genius for invention but was also a passionate social reformer. My own self-image to a tee! ●

John Carr

Cover Stories

Nothing begets interesting activity in the magazine market so much as hard times. When the going is good magazines can coast along; when it's not the choice is often between slowly but inexorably sinking or swimming with new currents. If **Spare Rib** has had to replot its course in order to stay in the swim. the emergence of **Everywoman** and **Women's Review** is the mark of the new. As their covers well indicate.

Spare Rib's old style coveres were less meant to please or grab attention than to convey the appropriate seriousness and 'correctness' of a certain feminist politics. They were marked off as *other* than women's glossies. **Spare Rib's** new style covers lean more on a mass market tradition. Glossy and in full colour there's sometimes a note of fun and humour, without the covers having lost their feminist trace. Thus October's issue offered a moustachioed air hostess (the unadorned image is from the British Airways 'supergirl' ad), and asked: 'Are airlines going unisex?'

For some feminists this foregrounding of design and playing around with the visual vocabulary of popular culture (with all the risks that entails of endorsing that of which one is critical) means that feminism is selling out. My own view is rather that such a ploy culturally transforms in a way that the old strategy could not. More to the point it sells, even though, as **Women's Review's** recent financial troubles reveal, the feminist press is hardly secure.

Troubles however, have not been a feminist perogative. In its bid for survival **Working Woman** has been tossed from owner to owner. Even the giant of publishers, IPC, has been stemming its losses: **Honey** has finally been given the chop, and with the staples – the weeklies – showing falling circulations, editors have been moved along. After six years at **Woman's Own** Iris Burton has been replaced by Bridget Rowe, whose background is the tabloids as well as women's magazines.

Such a pedigree has brought the odd shock to **Woman's Own,** not least a very unusual cover. 'Rape' was brandished in large red capitals and accompanied a small image of a woman, seated, covering her face with her hand: 'The report every woman must read and no man can ignore' (May 10).

The cover signals a shift. On the one hand the feminist press is now more ready to explore the tricksier elements of femininity. On the other feminist ideas have been assimilated into more mainstream publishing.

Having engaged in those arguments **Woman's Own**

could not, without compromise, carry the more usual cover image – the mask image of a young, attractive, white woman with her 'come-on' gaze. For is she not, after all, a close cousin of the page three pin-up?

But the cover also highlighted that if one front of the battle around representation and male violence is to challenge tabloid imagery, another is to check the conventional cover image of women's magazines. When that array of pouts and smiles is no longer the dominant visual vocabulary on the magazine stand, then might we have got somewhere? ●

Janice Winship

Photo: Abel Lagos

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BOOKS

Photo: Jenny Matthews/Format

Nuclear Alert

'But campaigners don't have time to read books' I thought, even as I agreed to carry out a Christmas review of nuclear books for *Marxism Today*. Trying vainly to remember the last book I had actually read from cover to cover, I noted down the key criteria a busy campaigner uses to assess good books: must have a good index and be well referenced; must be easy to flick through in order to pick out key passages and quotes; must have big print in order to be read easily on trains; must be short; must have thick enough paper to allow the use of highlighting pens without blurring the other side of the paper. Having laid down this exhaustive literary obstacle course, which the Booker Prize committee would do well to take note of, my final list of books would happily fit inside an *MT* carrier bag.

No review would be complete without a book on Chernobyl. Despite rumours of a whole series of books from the major publishing houses, only one so far has appeared. **The Worst Accident in the World** *(Observer/Pan Books £2.99)*, was brought out so quickly after the accident that publishers' normal six to 12-month schedules appear faintly ridiculous. The book is rather disjointed, and factually inaccurate in several places, but it captures the tension and confusion of those first two weeks. Before history is rewritten and Chernobyl becomes, like Three Mile Island, an 'incident' rather than an 'accident' according to the industry, buy it.

My favourite book is also one of the shortest. **Going Critical – An Unofficial History of British Nuclear Power** by *Walt Patterson, (Paladin £2.95)*, is a superb black comedy of the last 35 years of nuclear power in Britain. From the weapons' programme in the 1950s, to the Sizewell Inquiry, and with full accounts of our obsession with plutonium and reprocessing, Walt Patterson uses official documents and records to make his point.

Red Alert by *Judith Cook. (New English Library £8.95)*, is a comprehensive if rather heavy-going account of the many dangers of nuclear power. It covers a huge area but is marred a little by reliance upon secondary rather than primary sources of information. **Atomic Crossroads – before and after Sizewell** by *John Valentine (Merlin Books £5.95)*, is a book concerned with many things apart from just Sizewell. Its description of the sorry debacle of Dungeness B, (some 16 years late for commissioning – yet with official pronouncements every year still optimistically suggesting next year as a start-up date), is reason enough to buy it.

Everyone dealing with the media and MP's needs good reference books. **World Resources 1986** *(World Resources Institute, £12.00)*, and the **Gaia Atlas of Planet Management** *(Pan Books, £9.95)*, are my favourites.

The Worldwatch Institute continue to produce three to four excellent reports on the state of the world every year. **Decommissioning: Nuclear Power's Missing Link** by *Cynthia Pollock (Worldwatch Paper 69, £2.50)*, covers a less well-known aspect of nuclear power. The costs (up to £300m per reactor) and problems of taking old nuclear reactors apart are well documented and referenced.

Nuclear power is, of course, not just about technology, but about politics too. **How Nuclear Decisions Are Made** edited by *Sheila McLean. (Macmillan £6.95)*, is a summary of the Oxford Research Group's work on the people who make such decisions, in this case decisions concerning nuclear weapons. It is a vital book if you want to understand why Trident and the PWR were chosen as technological options. Somewhat depressing, but an essential read. ●

Stuart Boyle

Woman Can Fly

Unread theoretical books bought in 1986 accuse me from my shelves. And in my Scottish, feminist socialist guilt (a heavy combination!), I buy more, and add to the guilt.

It's been a year with more than its share of work, so reading has been an escape and a relaxation. It has also been a year with more than its share of 'existential' moments, involving grief and facing the necessity of choice.

For sheer nerve-tingling pleasure, I re-read *Angela Carter's* inventively irreverent, **Nights at the Circus.** *(Picador, £3.50)*. Fevvers, her heroine, takes us on a journey between the 19th and 20th centuries, away from the world of male certainties, into fantastic other (im)possible worlds, full of danger and joy. Its style, like the story, twists and turns and leaps until we are breathless and cheering out loud. A woman *can fly*.

Camped under an unlikely spreading fig tree in Corsica, I mused on *Sylvia Plath's* likening of figs to choices in **The Bell Jar.** 'I wanted each and every one of them, but choosing one meant losing all the rest, and as I sat there, unable to decide, the figs began to wrinkle and go black, and one by one, they plopped to the ground at my feet'.

But mostly, under the fig tree, I talked to my friends Mario and Orietta. Orietta is the sole representative of Democrazia Proletaria on the Florence district council; pressure enough, without also being a woman in Italian politics. While she lived on a diet of 'gialli' – translations of conventional English crime thrillers – I escaped into **She Came Too Late,** *(Women's Press £3.95 pbk)*, *Mary Wing's* 'lavender' pastiche of the 'gialli'. Its central theme – the womens' movement under threat from the new Right – is skilfully and subversively portrayed. The plot is neither here nor there – my copy had 40 pages missing and I didn't miss a thing.

Coming to terms with one's own past is the theme of **Other Women** *(Penguin £2.95 pbk)* by *Lisa Alther*. I loved **Kinflicks** *(Penguin £3.95 pbk)* in 1976 and I half expected to be disappointed in her latest novel. I wasn't.

But the most helpful book I read in 1986 was **A Reckoning** *(Women's Press £3.95 pbk)*, *May Sarton's* story of a woman's approaching death, at 60, from cancer. It offers some startling insights. Laura says, 'Dying is the most interesting thing I've ever done . . . when there are limits, it's easier to handle some things . . . I live in the present . . . it's quite a relief.' The last few pages describing her death in the presence of Ella, the friend of her youth and one of the most real connections of her life, had me sobbing at 80mph on a sleepless sleeper somewhere between London and Glasgow. When someone close, and close in years, dies, it's a reminder that this life is not a rehearsal for the real thing.

I have had to unlearn the results of a Scottish education this past year. I've discovered the pleasure of poetry. *Sylvia Plath's* **Selected Poems** *(Faber £2.95 pbk)* have helped, as have *Douglas Dunn's* **Elegies** *(Faber £3.95 pbk)* which I read in one sitting. And there's the promise of much future pleasure in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Orietta, whose English is worse than my Italian, recommended her. In any language, her absolute accuracy, precise connections and cool irony, fair take the breath away; they can surely change the way you see the world: 'Because I could not stop for death he kindly stopped for me'. ●

Jean Barr

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● **'Hue and Cry'.** The hottest salsa soul Scottish songs. Watch out for new single in December. Fan club. Box P005.

● **The Wildest** funk-night for younger left and mostly non-left set. Saturday nights in The Sub-Club, Jamaica Street, Glasgow. More details Box PO12.

● **Cambridge University** MT Reader's Group now active and thriving. For immediate contact write to Box PO13.

● **Exciting debate,** real challenge . . . Wolverhampton Poply. MT Reader's Group Box PO14.

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● **Thames Poly?** And sick of ultra-poseurs, boring politics and dogma, Contact Box PO16.

● **Kent** MT Reader's Groups want new members C.P. membership irrelevant. Box PO07.

● **For readers in Birkenhead** itself, also contact Box PO10.

● **Readers Group** to start in Holyhead. Contact Box PO08.

● **We need a network** in Manchester to debate real politics, support each other and refrain from the usual tacky slogans. Contact us at Box PO11.

● **You don't need to agree** with everything or anything MT says to agree to debate around the MT agenda. All welcome to non-sectarian Glasgow Reader's Group. Box PO17.

LEFT LETTERS

● **The international left network.**

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● **Experienced journalist** seeks work for leftie groups. Cheap rates for good, punchy copy. 01-482 1350.

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● **Part-time editorial sub** required for Marxism Today. We are looking for someone with a good visual sense to work for approx. 4 days per month compiling information graphics and writing headlines and introductions. Experience preferred. Phone Sally Townsend on 01-608 0265 for further details.

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● **The Pit, Barbican:** *Principia Scriptoriae,* by Richard Nelson. (24-27 Nov; 1-4, 19-20 Dec). 'A fascinating exploration of writers, literature and their relationship to politics' *City Limits.*

● *The Archbishop's Ceiling* by Arthur Miller. (28-29 Nov; 5-6, 31 Dec, 1-3 Jan). 'Superb Cast' *Standard.*

● **Heresies,** by Deborah Levy (10-18, 22, 23-26, 30 Dec.)

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● **Radical Scotland.** Scotland's top political magazine, bi-monthly. 70p. 40pp. Socialism; radicalism; Home Rule. Annual subscriptions £5.40. From 48 The Pleasance, Edinburgh, EH8 9TJ.

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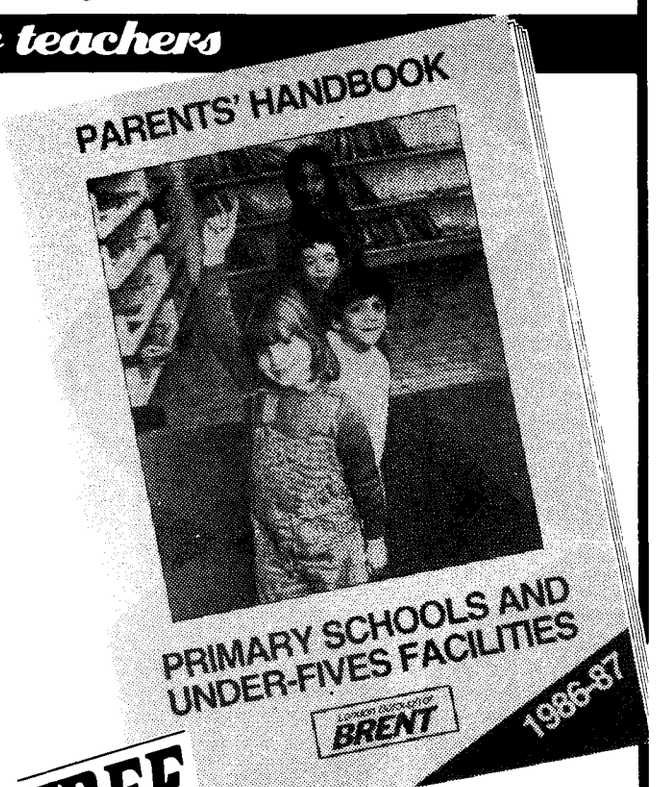

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UPDATE

SCHOOL'S OUT

A selection from the wide range of activities available for children and their parents this holidays:

National Museum of Wales, Cardiff
A workshop for children based on the museum's collections. Handle stone age tools, learn about biology or put together a display case. Every day except Monday Dec 15-Jan 16.
☛Details 022 397 951.

Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, London
To complement the exhibition on the spirit of Christmas, there are holiday events including making Christmas decorations and a demonstration of how to make Christmas sweets.
☛Details 01-980 2415.

Platt Hall, Manchester
Golden Slippers – two whole-day activities for children aged 10-14, based on a collection of shoes. Take an old pair of shoes to decorate with spangles, beads and baubles. A dance routine in the afternoon gives you a chance to show off your new creation.
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The Manor House, Ilkley
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☛Details 0535 664184.

Battersea Arts Centre, London
The Oily Cart Theatre Company presents two shows for children Dec 17-19. 'Up on the Roof' (11am) is for the under-fives and 'Slipped Disco' (2pm) for 7-11 year-olds. Also films every Saturday and Sunday at 3.30.
☛Details 01-223 6557.

The Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh
'Christmas is Coming' is a display of paintings, prints, drawings and photographs from Victorian times to the present. Practical sessions will be devoted to Victorian pastimes – making miniature food, novelties and silhouette pictures. Plus a Christmas decoration competition. Closing date: Nov 29.
☛Details 031 556 8921.

Museum of Mankind, London
In Mexico there is a long tradition of making large-scale nativity scenes for display at home or in the village. Some of these will be on display, demonstrating originality in design and choice of material. Children (aged 7-12) are invited to make their own nativity scene and join in a Mexican Xmas with games and music. Dec 31-Jan 2.
☛Details 01-437 2224, ext 43.

British Museum, London
'Archaeology in Britain' guides children round the British Museum's exhibition on British society from 200 BC to the end of the Middle Ages. A series of children's trails have been produced for all ages – don't miss the 2,000-year-old Bog Man!
☛Details 01-636 1555.

NEWS

Marxism Today
Inspired by Left Unlimited? Come and join our team of volunteers – you will play a full part in every aspect of the magazine. Many thanks to Rowena Chapman, Linsey Firkser, Dan Glaister, Don Redding, Andrew Walpole and John Scott for their help on this issue.
☛Contact Jane Critchley 01-608 0265.

Earthquake Appeal
The recent earthquake in El Salvador has left 1000 dead, 8000 injured and over 200,000 homeless. Very little aid is getting to these people. The El Salvador Solidarity Campaign has launched an appeal sponsored by Neil Kinnock, Arthur Scargill and many others.
☛Donations/Details ESSC, 13-16 Borough Rd, London SE1.

Troubles with the Police?
The London Strategic Policy Unit has produced a free leaflet called 'How to Make a Complaint Against the Police'.
☛Details LSPU, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Rd, London SW1.

EVENTS

Questioning Development Weekends
The International Voluntary Service are organising a series of weekend conferences all over the country to heighten awareness of how the causes and symptoms of underdevelopment are mirrored in Britain. £10 waged/£5 unwaged.
☛Details from IVS 091 261 1649.

Paul Robeson
A retrospective exhibition with video, tapes and photography will be followed by live music including South African jazz band, Kintone. Nov 23 at 7pm, Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh.
☛Details 031 661 1460.

History and Secrecy
The autumn conference of the Society for the Study of Labour History with sessions on the special branch, immigration, mutiny and public records. 10.30-4.30 Nov 29, Birkbeck College.
☛Details David Englander, Open University, Milton Keynes.

The Official Secrets Ball
A tribute to scandal and secrecy with stars of stage and screen. Cast includes: Cathy Tyson, Tom Watt (Lofty), Happy End, Tom Robinson. In aid of Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom and the Campaign for Freedom of Information. Sunday December 7, at Piccadilly Theatre.
Tickets £5-£40.
☛Details 01 437 6005

Growing Up With Auntie
Fifty years of the BBC. Screenings include: Dixon of Dock Green, Take Three Girls and the excellent Cathy Come Home. Guest speakers will introduce some of the programmes. December 1-20 at 6.30pm. Tickets £2.50. Institute for Contemporary Arts, London.
☛Details 01 930 0493

Remembering The Spanish Civil War
Lectures to commemorate the Spanish Civil War. Organised by Loughborough University. Speakers include: Jim Fyrth and Jim Jump.
☛Details Dr Ian Clarke 0509 222955 or Dr Jennie Elliot 0509 222224.

Measuring Up
A one-day conference on Labour's approach to local services, hosted by Jack Cunningham. November 24, Friends House, London
☛Details Anna Healy 01-708 1867.

CONTRIBUTORS

This month's contributors include:
Phillip Whitehead is an independent TV producer, former Labour MP and parliamentary candidate for Derby North.
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For **The Family** roundtable participants see p 18.
Joe Slovo is the chairman of the South African Communist Party and a member of the ANC national executive committee.
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Marxism Today

JOBS VACANT

DEPUTY EDITOR

Marxism Today is looking for someone to take over the position of deputy editor for a period of four months from mid-January during maternity leave. It is likely that the period will be somewhat longer than this, and the post could become a permanent one on either full-time or part-time basis.

Responsibilities include supervising production and schedules, liaising with the designer, typesetters and printer, co-ordinating section editors, commissioning and proof-reading. Income £7,000 p.a.
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Hafez al-Assad

The Hindawi affair, and Syria's part in working for the release of hostages held in Beirut, have highlighted the two contrasting images prevailing in the West of Syria's president, Hafez al-Assad. On the one hand, he is perceived as an extremist ready to resort to the most sinister methods to achieve his ends. On the other, he is regarded as a stabilising force in a politically chaotic part of the world, whose co-operation is vital if peace is ever to be attained.

Until recently, Western countries were prepared to play down suspected terrorist activity and its links with groups such as Abu Nidal's in order to maintain relations with Damascus. But the Hindawi trial and the subsequent cutting of relations with Syria by Britain have challenged this approach.

The role of Assad himself in the Hindawi plot is obscure, but whether he was aware of it, or whether it was planned independently by one of Syria's several intelligence agencies – perhaps even by a dissident faction – his standing has suffered.

'Assad is determined that other Arab countries should not follow Egypt's example in signing a peace agreement with Israel'

In November, Assad celebrated the 16th anniversary of his coming to power in a bloodless coup. His ability to have survived as president in a country previously famous for its high coup rate, and to have steered Syria to a pivotal position in Middle Eastern politics, is remarkable.

There was, however, nothing in his early background to suggest he would one day become president of Syria. He was born in 1930 in the village of Qardaha, inland from the Mediterranean port of Latakia. He is a member of the Alawi minority, comprising around 12% of the Syrian population, which is 70% Sunni Muslim. An offshoot of the Shi'a, the Alawis are regarded by many Muslims as heretics, although in 1973 Assad persuaded the Lebanese Shi'a leader, the late Imam Mousa Sadr, to rule that the Alawis are Shi'ites.

The Alawi mountains were one of the poorest and most backward areas of Syria, and like other Syrian minorities the Alawis used the Ba'th Party, created in 1940, and the military to advance themselves. In the years following the March 1963 coup led by Ba'thist and other officers, Assad was one of the central figures in the intricate jockeying for power between different Ba'thist factions before he achieved power in 1970.

This talent for manoeuvre has stood him in good stead during his presidency, when he has often been able to juggle a complex set of domestic and regional factors to Syria's benefit. He has made and broken alliances with sometimes ruthless abruptness, and his relations with the opposing factions in Lebanon, with the various Palestinian organisations and with other Arab states have frequently shifted over the past 10 years in the pursuit of his wider objectives.

Although much of the real political power in Syria is now concentrated in the hands of the Alawis, Assad has made efforts to widen his power base. Thus in the early days of his presidency he reversed some of the hard-line policies of his 'neo-Ba'thist' predecessors, courting the urban private sector with a series of economic liberalisations, establishing a People's Council (although this has little power), and improving relations with other Arab countries.

But the prospect of sectarian strife on Lebanese lines is a constant nightmare to Assad, and the regime has been unsparing towards its opponents, notably the Muslim Brotherhood, which has posed the biggest internal challenge. In February 1982 the army brutally crushed a Muslim Brotherhood rebellion in Hama in an operation that claimed the lives of over 20,000 people. Although this reduced the brotherhood's activities, Assad has this year been unnerved by a series of well co-ordinated bomb attacks. These have been variously attributed to the Muslim Brotherhood, Palestinians, the Iraqis, the Israelis and Lebanese Christians – the regime has no shortage of enemies.

Assad is a somewhat austere man, and a workaholic whose punishing schedule is thought to have precipitated his serious illness (probably a heart attack) in late 1983. The illness triggered shows of armed strength between Assad's controversial brother, Rifaat, and his military rivals. Rifaat, one of three vice-presidents, now appears to be in 'exile' in Europe, but the succession issue seems to be unresolved. If Assad is suddenly removed from the stage, there could well be a renewed struggle for power.

Assad is determined that other Arab countries should not follow Egypt's example in signing a peace agreement with Israel. He fears that in such a 'salami' approach to peace, he will be left out in the cold without regaining the Golan Heights seized by Israel in 1967. It was Syrian pressure that led Lebanon to abrogate a US-sponsored accord with Israel signed in May 1983. The deal collapsed the following March after the US withdrew its marines from Beirut.

But Assad still faces serious challenges in Lebanon, and has not succeeded in making the Syrian-backed peace agreement stick. The growing power of the Iranian-backed Shi'ite groups, particularly Hizbollah, is worrying him, and is putting further strain on relations with Iran which he supports in the Gulf War. He is also concerned about the Palestinian comeback in Lebanon.

Assad frequently refers to the need for strategic parity with Israel 'in political, demographic, social, educational, economic and military aspects of life.' He sees the treaty of friendship and co-operation signed with the Soviet Union in October 1980 as vital. Since the decimation of the Syrian air force in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the Soviet Union has installed a sophisticated air defence system, and has poured in weaponry.

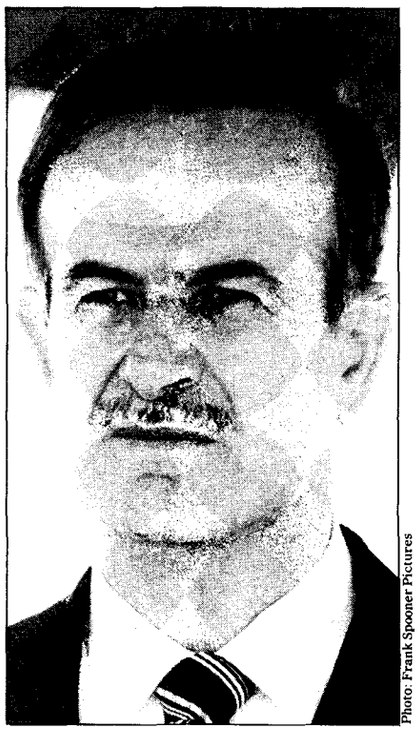

Photo: Frank Spooner Pictures

Assad: Under pressure

But Assad is far from being a 'Soviet proxy' in the Middle East, as is sometimes claimed, and there have been serious differences between the two sides – for example over divisions in the PLO. In addition, Assad has for all his rhetoric been keen to improve the dialogue with the West.

The coming months are likely to be a testing time for Assad. Not only are the political pressures mounting, but the Syrian economy is in a critical state, with a lack of hard currency and shortages of food, equipment and raw materials. But Assad still enjoys a strong regional position, and has squeezed out of many tight corners in the past.●

Susannah Tarbush

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